STUDIES IN TAMIL FOLK LITERATURE

(Collection papers read in International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies I and II)

N. VANAMAMALAI *M. A. L. T.*

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N. Vanamamalai.

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INTRODUCTION

Long before there was any written literature, there already existed a vast and complex form of oral literature. Its origin goes back to the begining of man's recorded history. It is handed down from generation to generation. However sophisticated we may be we use it in our everyday speech. Yet, the begining of this scientific study, which is one of the most exciting of all intellectual experience, is only a little over a hundred years old. In a sense, it started with W. J. Thoms who coined the English word "Folklore" replacing 'popular antiquities' n 1846.

During the past decades its value and fascination has grown phenomenolly. Interest in the subject gathered momentum, especially after Darwin's theory of biological evolution. Following Darwin's lead, scholars on the subject sought to reconstruct the ancient practices which is the begining of folklore study of the modern type.

The growth of interest in folklore reveals an intimate dependence upon the rise of nationalist spirit. Romantic nationalism or aggressive nationalism has coloured regional folklore everywhere. Of course, it has not attained to such position in India as in Finland and Ireland where the intensive scholarship in folklore assumed the leadership in socio-cultural field receiving support from their governments, as part of their endeavour to demonstrate their cultural independence.

Romantic nationalism has coloured Indian folklore in a different way. Neither the intensive scholarship of Finland nor the intensive propaganda of Russia has developed here. In the Republic of India the effectiveness of folklore study is mainly advanced by individual scholars of different linguistic regions. The works of the individuals are in most cases biased with aggressive nationalism and sentimentalism which is an obstacle for the development of folklore study in a scientific manner. Then most of the regional scholars of folklore of India have come from literature group. They have literary bias. But who can deny, a purely literary approach to the study of folklore is as profitless as a literary study of comic strips ?

Ironically the lore of the folk is strained and trumpeted through the mass media as a patriotic act. Surely, India could offer some homegrown folklore materials because it is a country where a rich variety of folklore is available.

We are living in a period of great social change. Indian society has been going through great changes for a long time. But the present change is much more profound in character than the earlier ones. The social and economic system is getting changed which have reflection in people's minds. Nodoubt, people of different classes, strata and social groups react differently to the

great changes in our social system. A new social consciousness is getting established and requires time for its consolidation. It has to be achieved step by step where folk lore both traditional and developing, may, confirm that it is an effective medium to that. Here there is roles of intellectuals. No accurate statistics are available on the. number of intellectuals in India. As far as their attitude is concerned, one may say that over 12 per cent are relatively familiar with folklore and take a firm stand. Among the total, they are minority, but they are nucleus and a powerful force.

Some people actually dislike our subject, some desire to study and have already learned a little when others have doubts. So they vacillate in moment of stress. We cannot force them to accept folklore study We must take up the task of disseminating folklore. This has to be done gradually and well, so that it is accepted by the majority willingly.

"Intellectuals are mental workers. Being educators and teachers, they themselves must first be educated. And all the more so in the present period of great change in the social system. It is wrong to assume that people who educate others no longer need ot study or that socialist remoulding means remoulding others—the landlords, the capitalists and the individual producers — but not the intellectuals". (Mao, 1956 : 240—42)

To be a good teacher one must be a good pupil Then there is the question of integration of the intellectuals with the masses of workers and peasants. It is chiefly through reading books that intellectuals acquire

the experience of our masses. Of course, it is necessary to read books, but it is also necessary for one to study the actual situation, examine practical experience and concrete material. In order to have real grasp of folkore study, one must learn it not only from books, but mainly through oral traditional materials, through practical work and close contact with the folk people. In the appraisal of one's work, it is one sided to regard everything either as all positive or as all negative. We must promote what is right, and oppose what is wrong. All folklore workers should unite themselves for the development of folklore study in the right way and to discuss Ideological work and all related problems. To attain this objective mass culture must be studied scientifically and asl ta ralional scale. It is the proletarian - led and anti - feuda culture of broad masses. This is the fundamental charac-erestic of folklore studies in India today.

Internationally, experience of foreign countries and especially Soviet experience guided left political parties in India in exploring the propaganda values of folklore. Precisely for this reason, the work of the left parties in India have founded very different politico-cultural organisation like Indian Peoples Theatre, Youth Festival, etc which organisations are utilizing different aspects of amusemental folklore for party propaganda, when businessmen and commercialmen are exploring its business possibilities in the far and wide market considering its present popularity. Still then scientific aspect of folklore is being neglected in India in the hands of serious workers and intellectuals at large.

It is well-known that all early literature was a reservoir of accumulated folk wisdom which served the people as an instruction on how to do things; what to avoid; how to lead a better life, etc. To fix this instrucs tion in the mind of the young, the elders found it necessary to resort a number of literary devices. This is oral traditional literature which every now and then is taking its shape in the forms of stories, sayings, songs, proverbs, riddles, rites, rituals etc. They are the different parts of folklore. The creators or narrators of different branches of folklore are very influential people, they play the role of educators, leaders and priests. They are highly regarded and respected by the masses who listen to them. Thereby folkore has been accepted as an effective media for mass communication it has been efficiently utilized by Soviet Russia where "Folklore is the vigorous creative expression of a revolutionary people against landlords, the Tsars, and the factory bosses". It is true that not all the forms of folklore are of equal merit. Many suffer from enormous bias, but it is fair to say that almost all the creation of folk literature share a common interest in exploring the nature of human animal.

To succeed in the objectives, the gifted elders, related experiences of great importance to their audience, or by their imaginative presentation. All these are thought provoking materials and the majority of which contain a guideline principle. They are expressed memorably. They present such materials that reveal the fundamental similarties in folklore of different parts of the world and their differences.

Although much good work in Indina regional folk lore have been done by the foreigners alike, much remains to be done. Most of the earlier works are generalised study which naturally suffer from actual data. Hence it appears to the scholars that time has come for more minute and intensive studies for investigation of special problems connected with the native people.

Needless to remember that Edward B.Tylor, J.G. Frazer, and the other scholars started to survey rapidly increasing amount of ethnographic data. In a sense, they have started scientific study of ethno -anthropo-'folklorological materials in the name of socio–behavioural sciences although the modern scientific anthropologists call them as arm chair anthroplogists, scholars of the prescientific period were dependent on the materials that were presented to them by the travellers, missionaries and others. With those materials sometime theories were constructed without endeavouring to go to the field for actual verification and investigation. But regardless of the validity of individual theories, it was intellectual ferment that stimulated them and this eventually led modern scholars of the subject going to the field for collecting unexplored and original data and analysing them in the discipline of socio biological sciences. This has developed and strengthened the folklore movement in india too.

Perhaps because of the complexity of folklore study, different types of books and field reports are coming out from different parts of the country both by the scholars

and by enthusiasts, by Indians and foreigners, through projected reseaιch by the University students, dessertati ons for different degrees, projector surveys by the advanced study centres or by government department of the appropiate ministries, or in individual efforts.

In this book prof. Vanamamalai has tackled certain aspects of Tamil folklore which is produced from research and individual field work. Most likely, it will serve the purpose of comparative scholars since it is an attempt to introduce original materials of Tamil folklore to non-Tamil readers because it is written in a common and understandable language.

Since Tamil folk literature is obviously the literature of the tradition-bound, unlettered masses of the Tamilnad, the temporal or spatial extent of its subject matter must be co-extensive with the duration of Tamil people. But though preoccupied with basic and universal problems, the approach to them differs. There are a number of basic concepts on which the people of Tamilnad and their brothern in other parts of the country held opposing views. To gather the points of differences and unity would result in a work of Himalayan task. The present book is an attempt to provide an idea of the contents used by the folk people for either enthusing themselves for better work or to pass a happy and merry time.

It should be noted here of the four great Dravidian languages, Tamil appeares to have preserved its Dravidian character best and it has a very old literature that goes back to more than 2000 years, According to south Indian tradition, Tamil was first developed by the sage Agastya

long before the advent of Aryans. The Dravidians were carrying their way of life and their sacred and secular traditions to remote parts of southern India and setting up through the centuries not only of merchandise but also of ideas, customs, learning and folklore. It is a moot question—were the traditions of Dravidians essentially Tamilians, or essentially Indian? Or an indistinguishable mixture? If we know enough about the secular folklore of Tamil group, would we find a common element setting it off from the current lore among their neighbours? And if so, would this seem to represent something that goes back to ancient Tamil?

To say that this book is an exact answer to these questions would be rash. But as there takes place intense activities in modern Tamilnad, an unprecented opportunity presents itself to the student of Tamil folklore. The Tamilans were throughout their long history literate people who developed at an early date the habit of commiting to writing whatever they regarded as important in their traditions, customs and habits. As a result, the history of Tamil folk literature may perhaps be characterised in each epoch by a continuous process of lifting out considerable bodies of folk literature from the stream of oral tradition and freezing them in written form. Still certain amount of literature could not be written down. It is handed down from generation to generation at said before. One of the reasons why folk literature was communicated orally rather than in print, was perhaps it is coarse and obscene, in a word, "unprintable". But the Aham poets in their description of the life of the

folk people to the Kings and Lords used many such words which the learned and cultured people of modern Tamilnad feel shy to use in their conversations. But they are not totally absent from the colloquials of the folk men and women.

The author of the book has a great advantage of having travelled widely with note book and has his own organisation and cadre which he utilised in carrying out his, work in the field. He is also a skilled listener, as well as a careful scholar.

The folklorist must accept his "role as historian of folksong and folktale and not be distracted by the desires to appear wise and significant. When the folklorist use literary versions, as he must, he should realize that he is not now studying folklore but the relationship of oral and written literature".

We cannot generalize about the nature of folk literature unless "we have a sharply defined corpus as the basis for remarks on folktale or folksong structure, formule, style, content, context, function, and method of transmission".

This is a thorughly valid and interdisciplinary study but it should not be confused with the strict study of oral literature itself. "If the folklorist wishes to be useful to the literary historian or critic, he must first stick to his own field to the last".

Our literary colleagues are sometimes confused, because of a failure to understand the difference between type and motif analysis. The Aarne–Thompson types, though still somewhat limited by the Grimm canon,

and occasionally accepting a tale from that canon as a true folktale type because the Gimms put it into their collection, are on the whole authentic in the sense that they are first of all based on a group of international tales, recurring in oral tradition again and again over a reasonable number of national boundaries and possessing some stability in that recurrence. The extant of oral tales are available for study as oral tales. The existence of literary versions, original or derivative, is a secondary matter" (Utley: 1961). We should face with the literary work based on the folk motif and style not with wholesale ostracism, but with critical testing of the document, just as we do with Boccaccio or even with the Grimms. Some studies are, of course, better than others, but this does not mean that we will only look for the better one and will completely ignore the other. Although we need better studies and anthologies, either based on wholy authentic oral material or strictly separating the oral material from the literary works. The problem is an aesthetic and scientific one. Folklore study is a scientific study and every scientific study is based on authentic data.

The folklorist is in the best position to be a critic of folk literature and the kind of literature derived from it. He has special grounds for judgement, since he knows, or should know, what folklore is. Here lies a great responsibility to a folklorist. He "must be a textual, a historical, and a configurational critic. It is a critical task, demanding attention to genesis but not that alone, textual accuracy and a sense of history in the broadest intellectual and cultural sense, and a sense of anthropological pattern and contrast". (Utley;1961).

Skilled story-tellers and eager listners have developed a notable body of tradional narrative. . In course of time some hundreds of stories have emerged and become a part of the repertory of many tellers of tales. Once all tales were told and listened to by the unlettered, but be gining some five or six thousand years ago the scribe and his writing began to influence the tradition. 'A body of narrative tradition is a gradual growth coming from many sources and taking many forms.

Folksayings is one of the earliest, if not the very earliest, form of literature and it was widely recognised as one of the most effective vehicles that could be used to impress upon a people moral code or an ethical system and this we said earlier. This utilization of the saying comes about quite naturally. Thus it deserves study for a number of reasons. Which we discussed in the foregoing paragraphs.

Folklorists can classify the elements in the culture of a given society according to the fraction of that society. The classification of folklore basically concern the contents of folklore. Arne, Thompson, Tylor, Child, are among the synonymi for catalogues and classifications of materials of verbal folklore. New names have been and are: being added to the list. Different types of folklore are being classified with modern outlook where naturally some old names will be magnified or obscured by the new classifiers. The author of the present book has classified motifs that is found in 'Silappadikaram' where folk motif is used

very extensively on important occasions. It is the first glorious cultural movement which aimed at integration and enrichment of the two streams of culture" (Vanamamalai, 1969:47). The present work has not concerned itself with any particular aspect of folklore study of Tamilnad. It is a collection of some essays of the author which is in no sense a treatise on Tamll folk literature but is hereby designed to furnish an adequate illustration of certain aspect of Tamil folklore.

Like other humanistic studies folklore shows the good and evil of human individual and his society which is also evident in the present study. How or why the people themselves use lore? "Needlessly subtle criticism tends to vanish when we simply admit, for instance' that a prove- rbial comment seeks to guide line; that a tale amuses, thrills. instracts; that a ballad presents a harsh tragedy in the loss of love or gay comedy in domestic farce. Not all folk values of the past can fit present society. Riddles, myths or epics are not so popular now as they once were." In this respect folk literature and art literature have much in common. Ideas and form of literary periods likewise are susceptible to cultural change. But living lore reminds us of interests and values still current; folklore is not merely antiquarian. If we are interested in people it is not unlikely that we will be interested in folklore. Such "lore gives a fascinating sense of continuity with the past in both pleasure and wisdom. The cultivation of folklore should, however, be more than undisciplined enthusiasm. Since folk literature has been an oral means of cemmunicatien, as much speech experience as possible should be included... by that students may enjoy

the opportunity to write their own stories, poems, of plays, using to some extent their knowledge of folk dialect and folk speech, customs, ways and beliefs" (Bosewell and Reaver 1962:200–01).

Inspite of the pragmatic limitation, it is hoped that this present book which contains altogether five articles such as (1) The Folk Motif of Silappadikaram; (2) A Study of Historical Ballads; (3) Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Inperialist Rule; (4) Social Themes in Tamil Folk Ballads and (5) Women in Tamil Folklore would be able to provide some leads towards more intensive research in the field which may prove abundanlty fertile Such a literature, uniting the laughing grace and pleasing philosophy appears called to the highest destiny and to the creating perhaps of a second Renaissance.

It is a report of the field work where two objects (I) scientific analysis; (II) classification and description of the greatest beauty found in the folk materials are discussed. The greatest charm of this study is that the materials which enrich the study still live in the hearts and minds of Tamilians. It is an attempt to reach the mind and heart of unsophisticated people of Tamilnad by their own material which is penetrating and exact. Of the five essays, two are devoted to ballads– one on the historical ballads of Tamilnad and the other on the social themes. Actually any folk ballad is a traditional "ballad, but the term ballad is often restrictively used in English to refer to child ballads. Ballads are in a sense sophisticated form of folk literature. They are more near to

sophisticated literature than any other forms of folk literature and they are creations of individuals. For several reasons more scholarship has been expended on ballads than as lyrics proper. The treatment of ballads in the present study is lively where the incidents of history as well as social themes such as caste oppresion, intercaste marriage, position of women, effects of patrilineal inheritance of women, unemployment and its effect, etc. are discussed. The position of women and the consolidation of feudalism and antifeudal struggles are also discussed in the present book. One can easily get a cursory idea about the nature of Tamil folk literature. from all what have been said in the present book "studies in Tamil folk literature by N.Vanamamalai.

Readers would find it an interesting study to compare such works of other region of the country as well as foreign works and the reference to them have therefore been appended in bibliographical notes. Their attention is also invited to the judgement and the treatment which are the justification of that minuteness of defail into which the author has entered against any change of prolixity that may be made; for they are needed to illustrate the soundness of his sober criticism. To the thinking mind it has also proved that such a study is efficacious. In them the readers find not only pronouncements which once were wisdom and are valid in our century as they were during the time of its origin.

Professor Vanamamalai is a sound regional folklorist who has honoured me by asking to write an introduction

for his book and I would therefore like to complemen him on the task he has performed in the face of many obvious difficulties.

Indian Folklore Society
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20-2-69

SANKAR SENGUPTA

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FOREWORD

"Studies in Tamil Folk Literature" by Sri. N. Vanamamalai, M.A. L.T., is to my mind a distinct addition to the subject of Tamil studies and Indian Folk-lore. It is an eminently scholarly work and it is bound to prove very useful not only because of the interest of the subject (in a very readable presentation of it) but also because the work is replete with well-documented information of all sorts connected with the Indian Folk Literature and Folk - lore as these have developed in the Tamil country. The work consists of five chapters in two parts. In the first part we have two essays.

I. Folk motif in the Silappadikaram, and

II. Study of Historical ballads in Tamilnad.

In the second part we have these three sections:

I. Consolidation of Feudalism and anti-feudal struggles in the Chola Imperialist rule.

II. Social themes in Tamil folk ballads; and

III. Women in Tamil folk-lore.

The first two papers were read at the first international conference - seminar on Tamil studies which was held some years ago at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and the third and fourth essays were read before the second International Conference of Tamil studies, which was held last year (January 1968) in Madras.

The first essay presents a new approach to this ancient literary classic of Tamil country, and we have here a very careful enquiry into some of the folk-elements which have found a place in this court epic. The general picture of "folk-ways" presented in the Silappadikaram does not present anything entirely new. But nevertheless a presentation of certain aspects of Tamil folk-life is useful. The first paper take sup some 48 pages including a short bibliography at the end. The second paper on the study of the historical ballads of Tamil (49 - 94) gives within a small compass a very readable survey of the more important historical ballads which are to be found in the Tamil country. The historical, political and social aspects of these ballads have been treated in detail. An important sidelight is shed into the political situation in the Tamil country during the middle of the 18 th century. There is quite a lot of the romantic as well as the heroic in these ballads and they are truly sacy of the roil, particularly characteristic of the troubled times of the 18 th century when the local Tamil freedom-fighters were striving to free their country from both the Muslim military control as well as the hands of the European adventurers who had turned the Tamil-land. into a cockpit by their continuous fights among themselves In this section of the ballads, we have, so far as the non-Tamil readers are concerned, quite an unexplored mass of material from the domain of Tamil. The third paper is historically very valuable in spite of the approved communistic jargon in which it is occasionally couched the title itself is an example. The economic and social situa-

tion in the Tamil country with the full appraisement of the privileges ofthe arsitocratic upper clases of Bhrahmins and landlords hasbeen very convincingly described in this article. The last two papers are also very useful for the study of Tamil society as reflected in folk literature.

On the whole, this is a very good book, and I hope it will be widely appreciated, considering that there are so few books based on authentic materials for the study of the folk - ways of any Indian population, whether in the North or in the South. Sr. Vanamamalai's book thus forms an important contribution to the study of folk - lore and folk - literature in India.

Suniti Kumar Chatterji,

"Sudharma"
16, Hindusthan Park,
Calcutta-29
23-3-69

The Folk Motif In Silappadikaram

Introduction

0.1 The common motif of the Sangam Poetry is Aham and Puram, love and war. Aham poetry has gone through different stages of development. Puram poetry has for its theme war and victory in war. Premarital love and married life are the themes of a large collection of 'Aham' poetry. Every theme external to love is included under the classification 'Puram'. Hence heroes of Puram poems are kings and military leaders. As poets and panars, (folk musicians) depended for their livelihood on kings, they composed poems praising the valour and generosity of their patrons. These two types of poems are considered to be classical themes.

0.2 The learned poets attached to courts looked down upon the rural folk, frowned upon folk songs, and considered folk songs beneath their notice. But even in the Sangam age there lived free lance poets who had intimate links with the common folk and sympathised with their life. They interpreted the life of the people to the kings and demanded justice for those who suffered. There are poems calling on kings not to wage wars but to turn their attention to improve facilities for irrigation in their dominion. Avvai, Paranar and Kapilar and host of other poets raised their voice against injustice cruelty and war and advised kings to rule over their kingdoms tempering justice with mercy.

Tholkappiar and folk songs

0.3 Folk songs existed even during the Sangam period. The illiterate and un-sophtisticated rural folk expressed their love, happiness and sufferrings in their own indigenous creations of art. It consisted of songs and dances. These forms of art and literature were recognised by Tholkappiar. Folk songs were classified as a type of poetry called Pannathi. Several folk dances are mentioned in Sangam poetry, such as Thunangai, Vallai, Kuravai etc., 1. Dr. Swaminatha Iyer has listed 56 types of folk songs. 2. At least a few of them were extant in the Sangam age. Tholkappiar has mentioned a few of these types and attempted to define them. We are not now in a position to know what the themes of these songs were or to indentify them in modern folk songs.

Varippadal a form of folk song

0.4 Commentators of Tholkappiar and Chillappadikaram have thrown light on the existence of a large volume of folk songs in their period. 'Varippadal' which was very popular in those days drew their attention. They classified Varippadal according to form and content. We shall refer to this type of folk song later on.

The theme of the folk song

1.1 What is the folk song motif. distinct from the classical literary motif? Wordsworth in his Solitary

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1, 2. Sangat thamilum, Firkalath thamilum, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer

Reaper makes surmises about the theme of her song as as he could not understand Gaelic, the language of the song

Will no one tell me what she sings ?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old unhappy, far off things,
And battles long ago ".
Or is it some more humble lay
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain
That has been and may be again ?

Two types of folk motifs.

1.2 These stanzas point out two types of themes common in folk songs. One type of folk songs tell as about events that happened in the distant past that still linger in folk memory.

Folk Memory

Mostly they are unhappy events that brought misery and destruction to the village. This type of songs take the form of the ballads singing about battles and folk heroes who took part in these wars. We may not learn about these battles and heroes from history books but folk memory still preserves them.

everyday themes.

1.3 The other type of song is more common in folk literature of all countries. The theme is an ordinary

event of every day life. It may be a personal loss like the death of a dear one, a natural loss like a drought, famine or destructive floods, or pain, like the pangs of starvation or pain of illness.

Classification of Folk motifs

1.4 A classification of the types of folk motifs has been attempted by the folk lorists of Tamilnad. K. V. Jaganathan thinks that there are 12 types: (1) themmangu, (2) Thangarathiname, (3) Rajathi, (4 Man and woman dialogue, (5) Songs of labourers (6) Song of the thiefs, (7) Family, (8) Lullabies, (9) Children's songs, (10) dirges (Pulambal), (11) Kummi, (12) Gods, (13) Miscellaneous songs.

Classification not logical

1.5 K. V. Jaganathan has not followed any single principle of division. His classification is on the basis of three principles of division, 4 to 10 being on the basis of content, 2 and 3 merely taking into account the refrain of the song 'Thangarathiname' and 'Rajathi, and 1 and 11 on the basis of form. Motifs of the same nature over lap in this classification. The same form is used to elaborate different motifs. Hence his classification is not logical.

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3. Malaiaruvi—An anthology of folk songs K. V. Jagannathan.

Correct Classification.

1.6 Since our concentration in this essay is on motif or content of the folk songs and their inclusion in Silappadikaram, and not on form, we must adopt only one principle of division, namely classification according to content. If our interest lay in ascertaining the nature of musical melody, we may adopt classification according to form or rythem.

a. Geographical Classification.

b. classification based on content.

1.7 Another principle of classification adopted unconsciously by folk lorists is geographical. This is not also helpful to our purpose. Since many motifs such as Lullaby, Dirge, Love, etc., are common to all geographical regions of Tamilnad, inspite of slight regional variations, the classification useful to our purpose is one that is based on content.

a. Hence the principle I would adopt to classify folk motif is based on folk life, human life from birth to death with all its simple joys and sorrows set in the rural environment. Hence I shall classify folk songs, beginning from the birth of a child. Songs associated with birth and lullabies will from the first type. The child grows up and plays with children of its own age. Songs sung while they play and those associated with childhood will form the second type. Youth is the stage of love will form the third type. The village youth has to work choosing some

occupation. Songs of labour will form the fourth type. Marriage and labour puts the youth into active relations with the society. Hence songs about social problems and married life form the fifth type. Death and loss of the prop of the family is the theme of the dirge. The sorrow and grief associated with death form the sixth type. Folk religion is based on fear of Gods and gratitude to them. Hence songs of prayer, invocation and fortune telling form the seventh type. This classification based on content of the folk songs exhausts the various genre of folk songs.

Folk motif intimate thoughts and feelings of rural folk

1.8 Folk songs deal with motifs of intimate feelings, hopes and fears of the village folk. Hence farsighted vision, philosophical speculations, and other themes far removed from their spheres of activity are not to be met with frequently in folk poetry. Hence exalted themes as integration of cultures, religious motifs, ethical motifs and political ideals are left to be treated by literary and epic poets.

Two Streams of literature.

1.9 Referring to this Prof. T. P. Minakshisundram remarks, "Learned people as the custodians of literary traditions have no sympathy for folk songs. Therefore these folk songs have not in all cases been preserved. But sometimes because of universal sympathy of certain poets, the folk song motif enters into the main literary

streams, rejuvenates and enriches it. This influence was noticed in Sangam literature, Silappadikaram and Thirukkural."

Folk motif in literature

1.10 Though a detailed and deep study of this process of integration is worthwhile and may be taken up later, the present writer wishes to limit his attention at present to the impact of folk motif on Silappadikaram, the first of our epics.

In the book I have referred to above, T. P. M. has his say about the influence of folk motif on Silappadikaram.

Folk motif in Silappadikaram

2.1 "Another important characteristic feature of this epic (Silappadikaram) is that the folk motif is used very extensively on important occasions. There are songs of the sea shore (Kanal Vari) the song of the dance of the hunters (Vettuva Vari) the dance of the shepherds (Aychiar Kuravai) the song and various kinds of folk songs as the song of the swing (Usal) the song of the ball (Kantuka Vari) coming in the Valthukkathai. There are other parts like 'Tunpamalai' where the heroine gives expression to her sorrow and desolation at the unjust slaughter of her busband." 5

4. A history of Tamil literature, T. P. Meenakshisundram. Page 152 - 153.

5. Prof. T. P. M. Ibid. - page 38.

Epic motif

2.2 The motif of Silappadikaram is to tell the story of Kannagi and her husband, both hailing from the Peruvanigar kudi (wealthy and infleutial merchant class) in Puhar. The fortunes of their life is the main theme of the epic. This theme is set in the social environment of the days of the epic. The poet projects into the poem the dreams and aspirations of the flourishing trading community to bring about cultural unity of Tamilnad so that their trade will extend over a large area. They desired peace and freedom to trade without restrictions such as tariff walls and political boundaries. They were successful to an extent thus rendering good service in breaking the isolation of the three political divisions. These aspirations find allegorical reflection in the division of the epic into three Kandas (Parts) the scene of which changes from Puhar to Madurai and finally to Vanchi, the capitals of the crowned monarchs of the Chola, Pandya and Chera kingdoms. The story moves along integrating the cultures of the people in all the three divisions of Tamilnad. Though the movement for cultural integration came from the wealthy merchant class, the poet in his universal sympathy for all classes sets out to blend and unite cultures in different stages of development known to him into the mainstream of his epic. Thus it is folk motif enters into the epic loosely linked to the main events of the story. Elango had not intended Silappadikaram to be merely the story of Kovalan and Kannagi but as the mirror image of the cultures of the

peoples of different geographical regions and political dominions. He felt that his mission was to preach common ethical concepts acceptable to people belonging to different religious persuasions. 6 To achieve his aim he has portrayed the life and culture of various communities of people including tribal folks inhabiting Tamilnad and brought them into contact with the hero or heroine who represent a higher type of culture but with no prejudice against lower stages of culture they come into contact. Their tolerance to the cultures of Vettuvars, Aaychiars, and Kunravars is just an example set up in the epic for representatives of a higher stage of culture to follow.

Relics of folk tradition

2.3 Now we shall proceed to examine a few folk motifs in Silappadikaram and try to compare them with folk motifs in folk lore itself. Such comparison is possible, because folk motifs are as old as man's civilisation and older than written literature. Most of the old traditions are preserved and relics of them still remain in folk poetry. The village life having been imprisoned in the self sufficient village commune system and hereditary division of labour based on caste system has contributed to stability of the rural society. The peasant struggles and revolt of the lower caste folk against socia- and economic oppression had caused a mere ripple on the stagnant life of the society, the foundation of which remained the same for thousands of years until the

6 Silappadikaram - Noorkatturai.

British conquest. manners and religious practices of the rural folks for centuries, though they also contain references to more recent happenings and changes. It is the task of the folk researcher to sift this complex of information and select such of them as are relevant to the period of the epic.

Mangala Valthu

2.4 Let us begin with the opening lines of the epic the Mangala Valthu Padal. Other epics begin with a prayer to the particular God who is considered to be the supreme being by the religion of the poet. Thus Kambar opens his epic with a prayer to Vishnu and Sekkilar to Siva. Silappadikaram differs from later epics in that its prayers are not to gods of Hindu mythology or to Buddha or Arukan but to deified objects and forces of nature. It echoes the prayers of the rural folk to the Gods of nature who are believed to command the winds, rain and weather. These gods appear to be their prototypes in Greek or Roman mythology.

Here is the praise to the Moon.

> Praise the Moon, praise the Moon
> Like the white umbrella of chenni garlanded
> with Kongu (flowers)
> Protects the wide beautiful world.

Here is the praise to the Sun.

> Praise the Sun, Praise the Sun
> Like the Kaveri ruler's wheel (of command)
> Circulates round the Mount Meru.

Here is the praise to the Rain.

> Praise Great Rain. Praise Great Rain.
> Like his grace gently drops down. 7

These opening lines of the epic has borrowed the folk motif of praise and thanks giving to the forces of nature that make possible our lives here on earth. These forces are deified according to folk tradition. Folk songs with such motifs are extant even to-day. Compare the following folk song, with the opening lines of the epic :

> "Our boys who drove the ploughshare with their hands
> now stand with weary hands
> Show mercy to them God of Rain.
> "Our boys who drove the ploughshare are burdened with care
> Show mercy for that, God of Rain."

As the rain falls the hearts of the rural folks fill with joy as water fills the tanks.

> Falls rain, Falls rain,
> Rain that failed falls now.
> Good rain falls. To make land wealthy, falls rain.

Again another song is in the form of an invocation to the God of Rain.

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7. Silappadikaram Valthukkathai Line 1 to 9.
Tamilnattu Pamarar Padalgal. Editor. N. Vanamamalai. Page 65.

May our misery end, May dark Rain fall
Dispel gloom in our hamlet,
May good rain fall.
May Summer rain fall, May our people
prosper.

Oh The King of the sky rain, Oh
the Great god of the skies,
Oh, the Great God of the skies,
command rain to fall. 8.

Such feelings and sentiments are quite common in Tamil folk songs through the centuries. This motif is adopted by Andal in her Tiruppavai and Naichiar tirumoli.

Wedding Ceremonies

2.5 A detailed description of ceremonies with an exaggerated gusto is a folk motif. Thus we have folk songs of the genre Mangala Valthu, otherwise named Kalyana Valthu or Kannala Valthu. I have included two Songs of this type in my anthology of folk songs. (Tamilar Nattuppadalgal, Edited by N. Vanamamalai.) One of them was collected from Tirunelveli and another from Coimbatore. The themes are similar. They describe the various ceremonies, the bride and the bride groom have to go through before they are proclaimed man and wife, the ornamental pandal in which the celebration is held and the part played by women folk in the ceremonies. The marriage celebration of Kannagi and

8. Ettil Elutha-k-kavithai., Editor P. Thooran. Page 45.

Kovalan is strikingly similar to those described in folk songs:

Now, Folk Song:

Planting plantains (they) adorned the entrance
Planting palms (they) adorned the pandal stand.
They walk right to the grinding stone, before the Pepul tree
By God's grace tie the holy jewel.
By God's grace round the girl jewel's neck. 9

Then follows blessings by the elders assempled there. Compare this with lines in the epic: Under the blue canopy and pearl adorned Pandal Led in the ceremonies by the old Parpan, (Brahmin).

They walked around the holy fire. 10.

Blessing.

2.6 The difference between the folk songs and the epic is found in the last portion of the blessings. The elders bless the couple both in the epic and the folk songs wishing them long wedded life, never permitting anything to loosen their embrace and never to know misery in life. The epic then ends the blessing with wishes for the long life and victory for the Chola king. The folk song is the artistic expression of the rural folk tightly shut up in the self sufficient village communes and hence their

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9. Tamilar Nattupadalgal. Page 319 and 329.
10. Silappadikaram Valthu-Pakkal Lines 49-51.

thoughts only now and then strayed outside their village or region. But the epic poet has a wider vision which he projects on the large canvass of the epic. Hence he wishes the Chola King victory all over India. Elangovadigal dreamed of unification of the whole of India under the benignant rule of Chembian. "May his wheel of command roll up to Himalayas and Meru and may he rule in unrivalled supremacy over the world." 11

Praise of the beloved in folk song.

3.1 After the marriage Kannagi and Kovalan live in happiness. Kovalan grows poetic in describing Kannagi. The passage describing her is very similar to the description of a beloved girl by her lover in a folk song.

Kovalan to Kannagi:

"Spotless gold, Light ringed pearl,
Blameless seed, sugarcane, honey,
Invaluable statue, elixir of life etc. "

Folk song lover to his sweetheart :

Enough to cast eyes on you
My sins will clear away
Oh my gold, solid piece of sugar,
Sugar cane, enough if I touch you.
Are you a well developed pearl?

The objects of comparison in the epic and the folk song is in every detail identical. The heroine is com-

11. Sillappadikaram. Valthu Padal - closing lines.

pared to gold, sugar-cane, sweet honey and solid piece of sugar and pearl. Thus the folk motif of rural love has attained the status of epic love in this passage.

Desertion - in Epic

3.2 Kovalan leaves Kannagi and goes to live with Mathavi, who lives a chaste life with Kovalan even though she was born in the family of a courtesan. Kannagi pines away in her loneliness and her unreciprocated love. But never once does she wish harm to Mathavi or Kovalan. She bears her cross patiently. The epic heroine shines in contrast to her counterpart in folk poetry who can never contain themselves when they find themselves in a similar situation. Deserted by her husband a wife rails at him and at his sweetheart.

> "You took me to see Papanasam
> And presented me with a burden
> What I bore for ten months
> Such was your love for me
> Now you have left me and
> Married a second wife.
> As you walk to her house
> Will not a flower snake bite you ?" 12

Again,

> "He walks away never casting a look at me
> It is because of that prostitute's daughter.
> I am as beautiful as a ripe fruit
> And she is as dirty as cow dung,
> Should he go to her at midnight ? 13

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12 and 13. Tamilar Nattuppatdalgal Editor N. Vanamamalai.

Difference

3.3 Folk heroines are unsophisticated and express their anger and jealousy violently. They cannot conceal their feelings in the depth of their hearts nor blame fate for everything. But Kannagi is intended to be the goddess of chastity and the poet brushes aside folk tradition following an anecdote of a former Kannagi, wife of Paken, both of whom figure in the poems of Kapılar and Paranar.

Kanal Vari

4.1 'Kanal Vari' or the Song of the sea shore integrates folk motif of the sexual love among fisherfolk, and the classical love themes of Neythal thinai.

Context

4.2 Prof. T. P. M. Summaries the theme of the 'Kanal Vari', (Chapter 7 of the epic) in these words. At the end of a great national festival to which all throng from the Himalayas downwards to witness the wonders of the Chola city, of these wonders being Mathavi's dance, go to the beach of that city. Kovalan sings extempore musical composition of 'Aham' poetry to the accompaniment of the musical instrument of *'Yal'* compositions consisting of a loving hero pining for the company of his lady love. Mathavi with a wounded heart mistakes this composition as giving expression to her love for another woman. What an atmosphere of suspicion. She sings another composition as though she

is in love with another. Kovalans erstwhile suspicions are aroused. Perhaps the loss of all his wealth in this life of pleasure, gives additional strength to this suspicion. He leaves Madhavi for good, though Madhavi refuses to believe that this is the final separation."

Varippadal - types.

4.3 These songs are introduced to bring about the separation of Kovalan from Madhavi and his return to Kannagi. They are classified under the generic type of folk songs called Varippadal. A few of them are enumerated as follows :

Kanal Vari, Arru Vari (song of the river), Charthu Vari, Mukhamil Vari, Nilai Vari, Mari Vari, Thinai Nilai Vari, Mayangu Thinai Vari, Sayal Vari, Vettuva Vari, (song of the hunters), Aychiar Kurai (song of the sheperdesses) Corsool Vari (song of going round the town) Ammanai Vari (song of the children playing with metal balls) Kanthuga Vari (song of the ball), Vellai-p-pattu (song of busking grain). 14

Definition of Adiyarkkunallar.

4.4 Vari is the name which denotes in common a type of dance and song. Its motif is clearly of folk character. Adiyarkkunallar comments on this .

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14. K. V. Jegannathan, (Ed) Malaiyaruvi. Anthology of folk songs. Introduction. P. 12. (Orientals Manuscripts series. 17)

'Vari describes the nature of the land where the hero is born and the occupation of the people of the land." 15 According to this definition of Vari, Kanal Vari or song of the seaside falls within the Neythal division of land. The occupation of the people of the land is fishing. These people live on the seashore. Hence the imagery is the seashore, fish, the vegetation on the sea shore and the life of the fishermen. The rythm varies, corresponding to the notes of the song of the peasants sung while they draw water to irrigate their fields, the song of the fisherwomen sung while they dance their folk dances etc.,

Motif of Kanal Vari

4.5 Hence the motif of Kanal Vari is the passionate sexual love of the fisherfolk expressed during the absence of the love partner on his fishing boats. The man may sing in his boat to wear away the weariness or in fear of his perilous job. The woman may sing pining for his embrace and concern for his safe return. The song will express feelings of lovers while they live alone in separation with the hope of being united. These folk motifs correspond to poems in Neythal Thinai which express thoughts and feelings of lovers who are parted by circumstances beyond their control. Such separation is common among fishermen, who are also boatmen and mariners.

Folk songs of fisher folk.

4.6 Folk songs collected from among fishermen, boatmen and other folks living near the sea-shore are of

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15. Chilappadikaram - Editorial Comment - Chapter 6.

several types. The most common among them are 'Amba' Pattu' sung by Roman Catholic Bharatha fishermen near Tuticorin, Kappal Pattu sung by all rural folks, Thoni Pattu (Boat song) sung by fisherfolk living near river banks and 'Ailasa' - sung by all working peoples. The common motif in all these songs is the same, - love pining for fulfilment.

Epic and folk songs of fisher folk.

4.7 This folk motif is adopted by the epic poet and blended with the Sangam literary tradition of Neythal Thinai, with ease and felicity and trahsmuted into the best lyrical poetry available in Tamil epics. Even here the poet never loses sight of his vision of a great Tamil empire. Kovalan begins his song with a reference to the ruling Chola monarch and praises river Cauvery for her patience and chastity. The conquests of the Chola ruler over the territories of Ganga and Kanni (Cape) are spoken of as his marriage with two queens Ganga and Kanni with the king. The song extols the supreme patience of Cauvery, which is likened to the Chola's wedded wife. Madhavi thinks that Kovalan refers to his own life with her and speaks of Kannagi as Cauvery. Then the song goes on to describe a beautiful maiden, walking along the sea shore, like a goddess desended from heaven. Seeing this woman, the hero is smitten with love. He desires her embrace to cure his love sickness. He then describes her beauty and calls her the God of death in the disguise of a woman. Her elders cast the nest and caught fish that suffered pangs of death. She cast her eye on him

and inflicted suffering like pangs of death. He calls upon the swan not to imitate her gait for it could never succeed in doing so.

4.8 Madhavi throughly misunderstands him. She also begins to sing in the same vein. She sings in innocent jest. She sings of her lover who had showered his love on her but had left her in sorrow. She assures her invisible lover that she could never forget his words to her assuring her of his quick return. How could he forget her eyes glowing with love as she stood bidding good bye to him. She begs him to return soon.

Folk Songs of Fisher folk

4.9 Love songs of the fisherfolk are met with infrequently in anthologies of folk poetry. But we have pictures of love lorn maids standing on the sea-shore wondering whether her lover or husband would return alive. Such is the danger of their occupation. We have a few dirges in which women whose husbands are dead, compare themselves to women on the sea shore disappointed to find that the ship they had expected to reach ashore safely had been wrecked on the perilous rocks off the shore. We have references to maiden of the fisher folk awaiting the return of their lovers, after sun set gazing out at the sea and counting the lanterns on boats moving towards the shore. The theme of Kanal Vari as well as a few poems in Sangam literature concerning the life of fisherfolk is drawn from folk motifs.

4.10 The imagery of the land being seperated by the boundless ocean has been thought appropriate as imagery to set in the feelings of separation of two lovers. Here the sea in Kanal Vari is not mere imagery. The incident on the sea shore becomes the turning point of the epic. Kovalan has now to return to Kannagi and his 'Manai Aram' (family ethics) the sacredness of married life. Not only that. The story will now turn to the metamorphosis of Kannagi of 'Puhar Kandam' the gentle, patient chaste woman to the Kannagi of Madurai-k-kandam, the righteously indignant, justice seeking, revolutionary.

Vettuva Vari

4.11 Kovalan, Kannagi and Kavunthi Adigal (the woman jain ascetie) proceed towards the Pandya Kingdom. On the way they witness the dance of the hunters and hear the prophecy of the greatness of Kannagi spreading from Kongu country to Chera country, to the whole of Tamilnad and to the whole country.

5.1 Now we shall turn to Vettuva vari, the second chapter of Madurai Khandam. The forms of worship of the rural folk offered to the folk deities are in the nature of (1) appeasement or (2) thanksgiving. When they suffer, they believe that it is due to the anger of a particular god or goddess. When the whole community suffers they seek to appease the presiding deity of the community by offering communal worship to it. In

tribal communities, this is always accompanied by dance and song 16.

Here in the epic the Eyinars or Vettuvars are highway robbers. They did not thrive in their ancient profession. They had become as gentle as jains or Brahmins. Their wives and children were starving. Their chief priestess called Salini told them that they had forgot ton to be thankful to the grace of the goddess Aiyai. They should celebrate a festival in her honour performing rituals to appease her.

Rituals and Worship

5.2 How did they prepare for the celebration and rituals ? They adorned a maiden of their tribe as Aiyai. They did her hair into a bob and around it wound a rope of grass in the shape of a snake. A boar's long teeth was set in the hair in the shape of a crescent moon. Tiger's teeth were slung into a chain and worn round her neck. Lion's hide was girded round her waist as robe. They gave her a bow and set her upon (a lion.)

5.3 They placed before the maiden offerings of cooked rice, spices and flesh. Mountain lasses carried and laid before her burning incense, flower garlands and wet seeds. Men came behind them carrying drums, flutes and other musical instruments.

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16 Verrier Elwin and his tribal word, Verrier Elwin.

5.4 Now the priestess came forward, bowed before the maiden representing Aiyai and told a prophecy

Discription of Aiyai

5.5 In their praise of the goddess they attribute to her stories and traits of Siva and Vishnu.

"One with an eye in the forehead,
The eyelids never move
Pearl lipped smiler,
One with dark neck, because she swallowed poison
The one who churned the ocean with a mountain bound by a snake
One who holds a trident and wears the hide of an elephant" etc.,
Amari, Kumari. Smari,
Sooli, Neeli, the younger sister of Mal. 17
(you) hold the chakra and sangam in both your hands
Red eyed Mal riding on the bullock
Wear river Ganga on your hair
And occupy a part of the brow eyed one
Take the shape of a woman praised by the Vedas." 17

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17. Vettuva Vari. Silappadikaram.

Description of Mari in folk lore

5.6 This conception of Aiyai corresponds to female folk deities of the present day. Mariamman is praised in long folk songs and we glean a description of the goddess from folk songs now extant. The folk song 'Muthu Mari' refers to Mariamman, 18 as the wife of Adhi Sivan 19. It also calls her as the younger sister of Narayanan. 20 Her mount is the lion. Another folk song Mariamman Pattu, calls her '[redacted] Rajagopalan's younger sister."

Offerings to Aiyai

5.7 The epic describes the offerings of the Eyinars to their goddess Aiyai. They are the produce of the forest and forest animals. So also the folk song enumerates the offerings of the rural folk to Mariamman. Flowers are most liked by the goddess. Then they offer salt, oil, seeds of all kinds of grains, beans, black gram, cotton seed and other things depending upon availability of these things. The tribal folk on the western ghats offer liquor, sheep, cock and tobacco and produce of the mountains. 21

Female deities

5.8 There is general agreement among anthropologists that worship of female deities was widely prevalent

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18. Malaiaruvi. An anthology of folk songs edited by K. V. Jagannathan.
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Forgotton sons of India.—Subbarayan.

among ancient tribes The manner of worship and ritual that from part of it are relics from ancient form of society that is no more. But the poet throws light upon the existence of such a society in his days in his description of the Eyinars. The description is not imaginary but drawn from real life. Hence the folk motif here, is only a realistic descriptian of a tribal society whose contact with the civilised world around them was through maraudering assaults and highway robbery. We find societies in just such stage of development except that they do not indulge in pillage, in the interior mountain fastnesses of the western ghats. The Eyinars do not think any harm to their guests even to-day. Tribals do not attack any stranger without provocation. The poet excites the sympathy of the reader to these outcastes of society who had taken recourse to banditry to earn their livelihood.

Aichiar Kuravai

6.1 Kovalan is slain by the soldiers of pandian Nedunchelian. Kannagi is staying with Madhavi, the shepherdess under whose care she had been left by Kavunthi Adigal. Madhavi and the shepherdesses see omens which forcaste evil to their community. The milk has not turned sour. The humped bullock sheds tears. The sheep does not bounce in joy. The cows tremble with heads bent low. The bells folk snapping the rope binding it to the necks of cattle.

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21. Melmalai Mnkhal Annakamu

6.2 These omens are interpreted as foreboding evil. The shepherdesses decide to worship Mayavan (the dark one, krishna) in a dance called Aichiar Kuravai. It was a dance first performed by Mayavan with his sweetheart Pinnai.

6.3 Singing a song they prepare for the dance. The purpose of this dance ritual was to please Mayavan and pray to him to protect their cattle. We have noted earlier in this essay that folk worship is always accompanied by song and dance. The theme of this dance was one of the stories of "Vala Charitha."

Krishna in folk lore

6.4 These stories were once prevalent in Tamilnad, a few of which were later incorporated in Bagavatham. Many of them were of folk origin. Krishna was first a folk hero of the shepherds and then deified and later became the author of a Philosophical discourse. *22* This course of development of krishna from the status of folk hero to that of god-hood is traced by many a scholar. The stories of Krishna were known to the people of Tamilnad. These stories picture him a destroyer of evil, ghosts and a protector of cows and cowherds, a mischievous child pestering women folk with his innocent pranks. Of his numerous sweet hearts, Nappinnai or Pinnai was known to the Sangam poets. Later poets also sing of him as a child and a lover.

22. **Historicity of Krishna - Heritage of India Volume I. Bhavan's Publications.**

Kuravai

6.5 Seven maidens stand in a circle, begin to dance to the rythm of a song in praise of Krishna, They sing his valorous exploits and his love for the shepherdess Nappinnai. They long to hear the sweet music of his flute which will dispel gloom and evil. This part of the Vari can be sung and also chanted.

Departure from folk motif

6.6 At this point the poet departing from folk motif introduces a prayer to the three kings of Tamilnad, Pandya, Chola, and Chera. They are referred to as incarnations of Mayavan. Pandya is called the protector of cows and slayer of a giant who took the form of a Kuruhthu tree. Chola is called "the one wielding the weapon 'chakra'." Chera is called the one who churned the sea". The epithets and exploits attributed to these Kings are those of Krishna in folk stories surviving to this day. The idea is that the kings are expected to protect them and their cattle wealth.

6.7 They conclude their song with a prayer "May the God whom we worshipped to-day protect our cattle from evil." This is a folk prayer. To this is added a prayer for the victory of the king. 24

Tamil folk songs on Krishna.

6.8 Songs of this type are sung by Brahmin girls during the Kolattam festival. The songs have for their theme

23. Canto 17 Aichiar Kuravai-Val Vari Valthu.
24. Last 5 lines of 'Aichiar Kuravai'.

the exploits of the divine child Krishna. He is pictured in these songs as an enemy of evil spirits, giants and Indra who in his anger with shepherds pours down heavy rain to destroy their cattle. Krishna holds up a mountain under which the cattle take shelter. Krishna protects shepherds from the attacks of their enemies and their cattle from cattle stealers. His amorous escapades with shepherdesses and his pranks on the shepherds and the complaints about his mischief to his mother are a few of the themes found in these songs. On the last day of the festival a miniature image of a cow is taken round the streets in processions, girls following singing songs and performing the Kolattam dance.

6.9 This festival, dance and the cow taken in procession suggest that is a relic of the Aichiar Kuravai. The girls also sing that they are shepherdesses who are pestered by the pranks of child Krishna. 25 This and other folk songs date back to ancient times. Sangam literature of the Mullai divisions speak of festivals in honour of Krishna and Balaraman, the elder brother of the former. At those festivals dances were performed and folk dramas were staged. The stories of the childhood of Krishna and Balarama are referred to in the epic as 'Vala Charitha Natakam, 26 which were a collectoin of folk stories and myths about the two shepherd heroes.

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25. Machu Veedu - K. V. Jegannathan.
26. Introduction to Aichiar Kuravai.

Thampa Malai garland of sorrows context

7.1 Kannagi is unaware the death of her husband. She gives expression to her anxiety in these words:

> Unable to see my lover my mind is sunk in
> confusion.
> My mind breathes harder than the bellows.
> If my mind breathes harder than bellows,
> What did the strangers talk, my friend?
> Shivering sickness overwhelms me at mid-day,
> My mind cries out to my lover who I cannot see
> If my mind cries out to my lover whom I
> cannot see
> What did the world say, my friend?

7.2 The news of the death of Kovalan was broken to Kannagi all of a sudden. But she is not overwhelmed with grief. She thinks of the life of a widow and shudders to think of her life as a lonely widow held in disgrace by the whole society. Her indignation flares up and she puts herself the question.

> Shall I suffer widowhood with all its pains,
> While the king has erred and the world speaks of
> ill of him.

Widowhood

7.3 Then the thought of widow's life of asceticism and despair arises in her mind. The widow dips herself

in many holy rivers and wanders about with pain at heart waiting for death. Her heart is burdened with care and she awaits death, tear dripping from eyes, day and night.

Who is responsible for her suffering

7.4 Her husband had been unjustly convicted and slain by the command of the king. She desires to prove the innocence of her husband and asks the Sun God to answer her question:

> "Is my husband a thief ?"

The Sun God answers so that all shepherdesses might hear :

> "He is not a thief. This city will be devoured
> by the bright flames of fire."

This chapter bears the title garland of sorrow, 'Thunpa Malai'

The dirge

The songs of mourning known as 'Oppari' express the despair and grief of bereaved wives. The folk motif of Oppari finds reflection in Thunpa Malai, wherein Kannagi describes the sufferings of widows.

Dirge in folk song

7.5 A folk heroine laments the sudden death of her husband in a riot.

"As I stood near the tank bund
Like a song bird - Not thinking
I am a song bird.
They shot me with a bullet.
As I stood near the river bank
Like a swan
Not thinking I was a swan
They wounded my heart with an arrow. 27"

The sufferings of widowhood is described by a woman who lost her husband.

Carrying a pot of milk
Carrying a non crow,ing cock,
If I go to the holy river
The brahmins bathing in the river
Will call me a sinner and wretch.
'Close the doors of the temple
The sinner approaches".
They would say. 28

The widow suffers for her sins in a previous birth. Even the holy waters cannot wash it off. She suffers indignity at all hands and leads a miserable life till death puts an end to it. Such themes recur frequently in Oppari (songs of lament).

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28. Tamilar Nattu-p-patalgal. Page 558.

Departure from folk motif

7.6 But in Thunpamalai, besides the familiar theme of grief and thoughts of the sufferings of widowhood we have kannagi, fixing the responsibility for the death of her husband on the king. While the unjust king lived and ruled without punishment for his misdeed, why should she suffer for his wrongs? This thought rouses her indignation. She seeks justice and destruction of the rule that brought this grievous wrong on her.

Transformation of Kannagi

7.7 This thought transforms her into a heroine fighting for justice against the might of the Pandya rule. Again, this transformation produces the revolutionary heroine of the epic for the first and the last time in Tamil literature.

In Oppari, the heroines never revolt against fate. They succumb to it and the passion they express is despair. It is understandable because a wife was but a shadow of her husband in feudal society and when the object falls, the shadow disappeared too.

Examples from folk lore

7.8 But we have an example of a ballad of revenge in which a courtesan killed by her lover, takes revenge upon him in her next birth. That is the story of Palavoor Neeli. That is lone example of a woman avenging

herself upon the lover who murders her treacherously. This story appears to be a very old one. The story is told in the Jain epic Neelakesi. Apart from this story in folk lore, there is the story of a woman who killed her husband when he tried to murder her. This is the story of Kundalakesi, 29 the Buddhist epic. These are stories of revenge. (Kundalakesi is of later date)

Point of difference

7.9 However they are stories of individual revenge. But Kannagi's desire was to end the injustice of Nedun. chezhian not merely by having her revenge upon him but by destroying the type of government which bred injustice and the capital itself which allowed it to go unchecked.

> "If it is true, I am chaste,
> I shan't allow this rule to exist
> I shall destroy Madurai too."

Hence Kannagi is not merely taking revenge for her personal grievance but to prevent injustice to any individual in Tamilnad and to bring home to the rulers of Tamilnad that failure to rendar justice to the people will be severely punished with death and loss of the throne.

Kunra Kuravai

8.1 The folk motif of the dance and song of the mountain tribes is adapted in Kunrakkuravai in

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29. Introduction to Neelakesi. - A. Chakaravarthi Nainar.

Vanjikandam. Kannagi destroys Madurai with fire and walks towards Western ghats. She climbs up the hill Tiruchengunru and stands underneath a Vagai tree. The tribal folk inhabiting the mountains of the west, approaching her ask her who she is. She tells them the story of the destruction of Madurai. Kovalan descends down and takes her to heaven. This miracle inspires the hill tribes to worship her as the goddess of the hill. They sing and dance Kunrakkuravai in her worship

Mountain tribes in the epic

8.2 The epic calls the tribal people Kunravar (Mountain people) and Kuravar. Their chieftains are malainadan (the ruler of the mountains), Verpan (the ruler of the mountain slopes). The life, customs and manners of he hill tribes of the western ghats are described in the book Melmalai-makkal 30. A few of their songs of invocation and prayer are included in the book.

Identification of the tribes

8.3 The different tribes of the mountain folk are in varying stages of social development. Names of some of these tribes are idential with the generic name of the mountain tribes Kunravar and their chieftain "Kunnuvar" or Mannadiar. They are at the highest stage of development of all the mountain tribes in the Madurai District. Kunnuvar is a corruption of Kunravar. Mannadiar or

30. **Melmalai-makkal - Annakamu (People of the western mountains)**

Mannadi sounds similar to Malainadan. They bear the title of 'Malaiarasar', which is the same as Malainadan. The name Muduvans suggesting that this tribal people were oldest inhabitants of the mountain connotes the same meaning as 'Moothilar' in Sangam poetry (oldest inhabitants). The occupation of the hill tribes varies from food gathering and hunting to mountain agriculture.

Picture of the hill tribe in sangam iiterature.

8.4 The Sangam literature gives us a picture of the life of the mountain tribes in poems of Kurinchi Thinai. Perumpanarrupadai and Malaipadu Kadam, give a full picture of the life of the inhabitants of the mountains. Sangam poems abound in instances of mothers of maidens who suffer from love-sickness, inviting the tribal priests to appease the God of the mountains and to perform rituals to cure the girls ot their illness. This priest is called Velan. He carries a spear and performs a dance before he prophesies the future happiness of the girl. The God of the mountain is 'Seyon' whose priest is Velan. Tholkappiam refers to the God of the mountain by this name. Murugairuppadai describes the worship of 'Seyon' in different shrines of Murugan in the mountainous regions..

Life of Modern hill tribes

8.5 Even to-day the chief God of the mountain tribes is Murugan. All the hill tribes of the Madurai District pay homage to 'Poomporai-nathan', an image of Murugan, installed in the temple at Poomporai or

Poomkunru, ten miles to the west of Kodaikanal. This temple contains old inscriptions and was consecrated in a song by Arunagirinathar. The deity of this temple Murugan claims the universal homage of all the tribes of the mountains in Madurai District.

Kunrootu festival of hill tribes

8.6 They celebrate a festival called 'Kunnootu' (Literally feeding the mountains). They make offerings to the gods of the mountains invoking their blessing on the people inhabiting the mountains and sing and dance as part of the celebration. The themes of the songs express the desires of these people for a happy prosperous life and the prayers of maidens to be granted good husbands. Annakamu notes the close similarity between Kunrakkuravai and the Kunnootupattu. 31

Kuravai and Kunnupattu

8.7 The points of similarity between the Kuravai and the Kunnupattu may be noted briefly.

Kunnupattu

(1) The God to whom worship is offered is Velan. He is noted as Velan and not by any of his other names, Murugan, Subramanian or Kandan.

(2) The dance is performed to the rythm of a song with the accompaniment of drums, flute and other musical instruments.

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1. **Melmalai Makkal - Anakamu (chapter on Kunnuvar Attar - a spiee.**

(3) The theme is the desire of maiden to be married to a good husband.

(4) The song closes with an invocation and prayer to bless the dancers, with wealth and prosperity.

Song

To illustrate, I shall quote extracts from a Kunnootupattu sung by the Mannadis.

(1) Attar and Rose water
Where does it smell sweet ?
On the body of Velavar
It smells sweet.

(2) Sandal and Kumkum
Where does it smell ?
On Shanmuga Velavar
It smells sweet.

The reference in these songs is to the God of the mountains, Velavar. Then follows a amorous theme. It is in the form of a dialogue between a lover and his sweet-heart.

Man — Moon in Masi month,
Spotless moon
To go to Mathur
Will you, Moon?

Woman — Not to Mathur,
I wither near the cattle fence,
What is your quarrel
With that cattle fence
I shall wither till my lover approach it

Man — Moon at the zenith of the sky,
Unhidden Moon,
Shall we go to our hamlet,
Will you go with me, Moon?

Woman — No, not to our hamlet,
I pine alone in the hamlet
What is your quarrel
With the stone at the bounds of our hamlet.
Till my lover approaches
I shall pine away.

The prayer expressing their wish

A shower of rain every month
May it rain Mannadi ? 32
For each flock slay a sheep.
A shower on our village,
May it rain Mannadi?
For each village
Slay a sheep.

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32. Mannadi from the context refers to Velavar.

Custom

8.8 Annakannu mentions a custom of the Kunnavar prevalent even to-day of going in a procession to a water-falls or stream to take holy bath before they arrive at the temple of Poomporainathar bringing 'Devapotti' (the holy box containing the offerings).

Kunnavar in the Epic

8.9 How we shall turn our attention to the Kunra-kuravai in the epic and note the similarities between it and Kunnootu Pattu.

(1) The hill tribes take bath in the water-falls and mountain lakes before they approach Kannagi standing under a tree.

(2) They see her ascending to heaven with her husband. They bring offerings of flowers, and incense.

(3) The Musical instruments they bring or mentioned;". Thondakam, Parai and bells."

Rituals

8.10 The song describes the water-falls in which the men and women take their holy bath. The song then turns to the amorous theme. The women pine for their lovers who had left them after a blissful union (Compare this with the themes of the Kunnupattu). Then they perform the Kuravai dance. It is entirelyaa

women's folk dance. They praise the spear, the holy weapon held by Velan. It is the weapon that killed Sura (the giant) and other giants, and destroyed Kuruku the giant who transformed himself into a tree to escape death at the hands of Velan.

Prayer

8·11 Then the song proceeds to mention a Veriattu (an inspired dance of the Velan) of the Velan to cure a maiden of her love-sickness. It redicules his ignorance of the cause for the sickness. The girls pray to the Velan to grant them their desire to be united in marriage to the lads who had captuted their hearts.

As the meadow where Velan dances,
if the son of the god of the banyan tree
with his consort appears on the blue bird
we shall pray to him to grant us marriage with
the chieftain of this mountain 33.

They then praise kannagi and pray to her to grant their heart's desire.

Prayer for the King

8.12 They end their song with the words:

Thus we sing and dance.
witnessing this my lover came,
partook happily of our feast and may helive long!

May the king of the Kutravars
who rules over Himalayas
and Kolli mountains live long

Remarks.

8.13 Thus the folk dance and song of an ancient tribe which still persists with certain variations, has been the model upon which the Kunrakkuravai is based. The similarities between the folk song the Kunrakkuravai points to that conclusion.

8.14 The epic motif is introduced in the prayer to Kannagi the heroine and good wishes to Cheran Senguttuvan, the ruler of the country, in which the event takes place. Otherwise the folk motif pervades the whole chapter.

8.15 Vanjikkandam is the part of the epic where Kannagi the human heroine of Madurai-k-kandam becomes the goddess of chastity, worshipped first by the people of the mountains and then as her fame spread far and wide, by the king of the country. Later she came to be worshipped by many other kings. Thus pattini cult spread throughout South East Asia.

Valthuppadal.

9.1 The songs of blessing or valthuppadal have drawn upon motif and form of play songs of children. The song about Cheren is in the form called Ammanai, a song still sung by girls when they play at Kalangu (metallic

balls). It is in the form of qnestion and answer. The song about Pandian is in the form of Kanthuka vari, the folk form of which is Poompanthu Pattu (song of the ball). The song about Chera is in the form 'Oosal Vari' (Oonchal Pattu) the song of the swing. There are three songs in the form Vallaippattu (the Ulakkai Pattu) the same that peasant maidens sing while husking grain 34.

Here the epic theme of blessing to the three monarchs is integrated with folk motif and form.

Folk stories and the epic.

Stories which were current in folk lore are mentioned in the epic :—

The stories of Davanthi in Canto 9, Mangattu Parpan's description of the way to Madurai, in Canto 11, the story of the exploits of thiefs narrated by the goldsmith in Canto 16, the stories of the seven chaste women of Puhar in canto 21 are all folk stories which must have been prevalent in the regions referred to in the epic. Devanthi was the wife of a god Pasanda Chathan who took human form to save a woman devotee from blame of having caused the death of her co-wife's child. He grew into man - hood and married and Devanthi, revealed his real form and bade her to come and live in his temple. Such stories of gods marrying chaste women, and godsthemselves suffering for their devotees and saving them

34. Silappadikaram Canto 23, stanzas 13–29

from blame or punishment are common in folk myth. The stories of Bhoothathan, Aiyappan and a few Sasthas are reminescent of the story of Pasanda Chathan. Evil spirits deveouring children or dead bodies of children and good spirits restoring these children to parents is a commonly recurring theme in folk myth. The theme of an old folk play 'Kousika Natakam' is the story of a devotee of Vishnu being saved by him from the clutches of an evil spirit who threatens to devour him. God appear in human shape and offers himself as the victim in his stead.

The description of the way to Madurai through a dangerous cavern guarded by a female spirit, who would allow med to pass only, if the problems set by her is solved by them, is a theme common in type folk tales known as *'problem stories'*. Such stories are found in the Buddha jatakas adn in a long folk ballad in Tamil *"Tamil Ariyum Perumal Kathai."*

10.2 The stories of chaste women are drawn from folk stories of the type which must have been known among people of Puhar region. The heroines of these stories are women of Vanigar community, who had to endure long separation from their husbands living abroad engaged in trade. Such stories are found in later works as Pattinathar Puranam and Nagarathar Puranam both of which embody many folk stories about their community in literary form.

Folk songs mentioned

11.1 Certain types of folk songs are mentioned by Elango in Canto 10, in which he describes the scenes Kovalan and Kannagi see on their way to Madurai. They listen to the song of the peasant womeg sitting on the bunds of fields. He calls it 'Virunthil Pani', Peasants sing as they drive the bullocks drawing the plough share. This is called 'Er mangalam' and the song sung while measuring grain is called 'Mukavai-p-pattu.

Folk dances

12.1 Mention is also made of two kinds of dances *Vetthial* and *Poduviyal*, the classical dance and the folk dance. Here dances of the *poduviyal* type are not real folk dances, since only the professional dancer, Madhavi per forms it with elaborate make up and accompanying instruments. They are folk themes and forms trans-muted into classical art. A detailed investigation into this subject is beyond the scope of this paper and must be left for the consideration of a more competent scholar well versed in music and dance.

Dreams in the epic

13.1 Dreams forecasting evil of good fortune are intr oduced to arouse interest in future events or to provide an appropriate atmosphere to the events that follow. This is a folk motif adapted by Elango and Kamban. We have in the epic the dream ofKannagi in Canto 9. '*Kana Thiram Uraitha kathai*' and the dream of Pandi Ma Devi in

valakkurai Kathai - canto 20· These two dreams forecast evil. These dreams occur to women whose husbands are going to die soon. Even to-day our folks believe that bad dreams forebode evil.

Conclusions

14.1 We are now in a position to come to certain conclusions about the use of folk motif in Silappdikaram.

As I have pointed out earlier the aim of the poet as he himself expresses in the epilogue is :

(1) to portray the culture flourishing in the five divisions of Tamilnad embodied in the two dialectical divisions of Tamil language.

(2) to formulate an integrated ethical way of life (Aram, Porul, Inpam) to the whole of the Tamil people.

(3) to express these noble ideals in forms of art such as padal' ezhal, pann, pani, arangu, vilakku, and

(b) vari, kuravai and chetham.

(4) He would portray the entire culture of the Tamils in his epic in miniature, as the reflection of a huge mountain in a hand mirror.

14.2 The poet was aware that there were two types of cultural currents in his days, the classical and the folk. He set himself to integrate the two in order that he might enrich the cultural heritage of Tamil Nad. Not merely

did he portray it, but lifted them up to a higher plane by integrating the two currents of culture.

14.3 How has he achieved this aim ?

(1) The epic motif of the integration of the Tamil Nad, culturally, emoticnally and politically is amalgamated with the profuse humanism of folk culture.

(2) The folk aspirations of a simple happy life expressed in their ceremonies and folk art looked upon with is sympathy and understanding by the hero and heroine of the story. This is brought about by bringing about contacts between them and the folks as in *Vettuva vari Aichiarkuravai* and *Kunra-h-kuravai*

(3) The simple beliefs, hopes and fears of the folk are brought into the epic in the conversations of the epic characters as in the conversation between Devanthi and Kannagi.

(4) The folk culture in its pure form is witnessed by the epic characters with sympathy and appreciation.

(5) The classical forms of art drew upon folk motifs and forms as in the Poduvial and Varikkoothu of Madhavi. Thus folk motif and form enrich the main current of classical art.

(6) The folk motifs of folk songs are integrated with fhe poetic tradition of the past as Kanal Vari with Neythal Thinai.

(7) The folk gods and goddesses are identified or related to Puranic gods as in Aichiar Kuravai or Vettuva Vari. This attempt makes for unity of folk religion with the religions of the sophisticated people.

14.5 Silappadikaram is the epic reflecting the first glorious movement of cultural movement of our Tamilnad. This movement aimed at integration and enrichment of the two streams of culture. The epic has succeeded to a large extent in achieving this aim.

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A Study of the Historical Ballads of Tamilnad

Introduction

0.1 There is a very large body of folk lore of the type of folk ballads. These can be classified into four types: (i) Mythical. (ii) Epic, (iii) Social, (iv) Historical.

0.2 Mythical ballads deal with the origin of folk dieties such as Sastha, Mutharamman, Neeliamman, Muppudathi, Karuppannaswamy, etc.,

0.3 Epic ballads are adaptations of stories of Hindu Mythology. These adaptations bear no resemblance to the originals, their character and content undergoing complete transformation in folk imagination. Examples. *Enie Erram, Ponnuruvi-Masakkai, Alli Arasani Malai* etc., (ஏணி ஏற்றம் பொன்னுருவி மசக்கை, அல்லி அரசாணி மாலை)

0.4 Social ballads deal with intercaste marriage, property rights for women, and oppression by the caste-system. Examples: '*Muthupattan Kathai*' '*Nallathangal Kathai*', and '*Sinnathambi Kathai*'.

0.5 Historical ballads deal with incidents of history; mostly with the causes, course and results of battles. The story of a hero is traced through the incidents of history. The heroism and personal traits of the hero are exalted, shown up as examples to follow. This type of ballad is much more rare than the other types mentioned above.

Historical ballads now extant are : *'Iver Rajakkal Kathai'* (ஐவர் ராஜாக்கள் கதை) *'Kannadian Padai Por'* (கன்னடியன் படைப் போர்), *'Moonrulagukonda Amman Kathai'* (மூன்றுலகு கொண்ட அம்மன் கதை) *'Vettumperumal Kathai'* (வெட்டும் பெருமாள் கதை) *'Ramappaiyan Ammanai'* (ராமப்பையயன் அம்மானை) *'Eravikutti Pillai Por'* (இரவிக் குட்டி பிள்ளை போர்) *'Sivagangai Ammanai'* (சிவகங்கை அம்மானை) *'Sivagangai Kummi'* (சிவகங்கை கும்மி) *'Poolu Thevan Sindhu'* (பூலுத்தேவன் சிந்து) *'Kattabomman Kathai Padal'* (கட்டபொம்மன் கதைப் பாடல்) etc.

1.1 Folk literature in Tamil has received the attention of scholars only recently. Work has been done only in collecting and publishing occasional folk songs, and a large collection of folk songs have been brought out in book-form. But folk ballads, long narratives, poems containing a story, have not received the attention of scholars. As such, we do not have well edited printed ballads available for research and study.

1.2 A few historical ballads have been brought out in book-form and since they are very few in number, they can easily be enumerated.

'Ramappaiyan Ammanai' has been printed in two editions, one by the University of Madras, and the other by the Saraswathi Mahal Library. The first edition was edited by Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai. It contains as an appendix to the ballad *'Iravikutti Pillai Por'* *Sivagangai Kummi* and *Ammanai* were published a few years ago by

the Government Oriental Manuscripts Series. *Kattabomman Kathai Padal* was published in 1962, edited by the author of this paper.

1.3. These are the only ballads edited and printed in book-form. The other ballads mentioned above are either available printed form as cheap books printed badly and abounding in errors, or in the form of cadjan manuscripts, in partly damaged condition. We only know the names of a few ballads, the manuscripts of which are not available, but we do hear of the story of the ballads in places where the incidents of the story are said to have occured. Hence the primary requirements for research in this field is to collect all available manuscripts, and edit them and bring them out in book-form.

1.4 A few ballads are still extant since they are sung to rural audiences on days [1] of propitiation of the village deities. Heroes of folk history are sometimes deified [2] in the places of their birth or activity, and their stories are sung when festivals are held in their honour. Thus '*Iver Rajakkal Kathai*' is sung as Villuppattu (bow song) in certain tracts of the Tirunelveli District. Heroes like Marudhu, Poolu Thevan or Kattabomman are not considered to be gods, but only as mortal heroes with supernatural powers, and hence their stories are sung on occasions of festivities or enacted as folk dramas or Koothu. Those ballads which are now sung to rural audiences are liable to undergo changes in the text because of the extempore innovations of the folk singers.

Hence variations in essential particulars of the story may be noticed in the texts of the ballad as sung in different parts of the Tirunelveli District.

2.0 *Classification of the Ballads According to Chronology of the events of the story.*

Available historical ballads cover a period between the middle ot the 15th century to the end of the 18th century with a few gaps in between. These ballads can be classified under three periods.

First period. The struggle between the Kannada rulers and the Pandyan rulers.

Second period. The struggle between the Nayaks of Madurai and the Marava Chieftain of Ramnad.

Third period. The struggle of Polygars of the South against the expansion of British power.

2.1 *The Earliest Ballads, Struggles between Kannadigas and Pandyas.*

The earliest ballads refer to a struggle between the Kannada invaders and the Pandyan Chieftains of the South. Many ballads narrate the story of the battles which the Pancha Pandyar பஞ்ச பாண்டியர் or Iver Rajakkal ஐவர் ராஜாக்கள், the five Pandyas or the Five Kings fought against the Kannada invaders.

2.2 *Version-1.* The name of the Kannada invader is not mentioned in any one of the ballads. *'Pancha Pandyar Kathai'* tells us the story of Kulasekara Pandyan and his five brothers. They were chieftains of Kayatar. The Kanada king laid seige to their fort and a terrible battle ensued. The Kanada King sent an emissary offering a duel with each of the brothers to avoid wholesale slaughter of the population and blood-shed and ravage on a large scale. They entered into a solemn agreement that the one who would be defeated should leave the country in case he was left alive. In the duel that followed, all the brothers, save the youngest, were killed. He was captured and the Kannada thought of a brilliant stroke of diplomacy. He would give his daughter in marriage to the surviving Pandya and thus cement the two royal dynasties in friendship. He ordered the prince to be carried in a palanquin to his headquarters. On the way the prince swallowed a piece of broken diamond and died. The princes having heard of the prince and the vow of her father to marry her to him decided to burn herself on the funeral pyre of the prince.

2.3 *Version-2.* Another version of this story is found in *'Iver Rajakkal Kathai'* The Kannada king was ruling peacefully at Sheranmahadevi. He sent emissaries to the five Pandyas[3], ruling at Valliyoor with proposals of marriage of his daughter with the Pandya prince. The proposal having been rejected by the Pandya, the Kannada king invaded his territory, reduced the fortress of Valliyoor, killed the Pandya and his brothers and captured

the prince. The rest of the story is the same as the *'Pancha Pandiyar Kathai'*.

2.4 *Version-3.* Another story with a similar theme is the *'Kannadian Padai Por'* Kulasekara Pandian, with his four brothers, was living at Valliyoor. The Kannadian king desired to marry his daughter to the Pandya prince. The Pandyas rejected the proposal. A war ensued and the Kannada king was beaten back. Two valiant young men Mathippan and Mannan were generals in the Pandyan army and their leadership was so efficient that the Pandyan army was invincible. The Kannada king sent a spy to murder the brothers. He went into the Pandyan camp in disguise and cut off the head of the elder brother Mannan. While he was escaping with Mannans' head concealed in a pot, he was spotted out by the younger brother. He demanded that the stranger should show what was in the pot. He showed the severed head and the younger brother growing furious killed the spy. This story is referred to in the poem" *Shembagaraman Pallu*"[4]—1766) (சண்பகராமன் பள்ளு)

There is a mention of another story *'Vettumperumal Kathai*). He is spoken of as the chieftain of Kayatar who fought against a Kannada king. *'History of the Maravas'*[5] mentions a ballad about these two chieftains, but the existence of the ballad has not come to light.

3.1 *Historical Background.* The ballads certainly refer to a struggle between Kannada invaders and Pandya chieftains of the South. over a long period of time.

(1) To what historrical times to the ballads refer ?

(2) Who were the Kannada kings figuring as invaders in the ballads ?

(3) Were the Pandyans historical persons and how far are historical facts reflected in the ballads ?

3.2 It is generally accepted that the Hosyala ruler Ballala III met Giat-uddin of Madurai in 1342 in battle and the Sultan lost his life. The battle took place at Kannanur Koppam. The aim of the invasion was to destroy the Sultanate of Madurai. He was the first Kannada Invader, after the establishment ofthe Sultanate, who came south as far as Madurai. The Muslim historians Shamsi-Siraj-Afif mentions the defeat and death of Qurbat Hasankangu, the Sultan of Madurai, in a battle between him and a neighbour chief Bakan. Dr. Krishnaswamy examined the identification of Bakan with Kannara Kampanna by Dr. Venkataramanayya and Thiruvenkatachari, and refutes their views and concludes that Bakan was no other than Bakka I, the younger brother of Harihara, the co-founder of the Vijayanagara Dynasty. The third Kannada invader who invaded Madurai was Bakka's son, Kampana. He defeated Sultan Muberak in 1371. His victory over the Sultan is celebrated in a poem *'Madura Vijayam'* by his wife Sri Gangadevi. The Sultanate had been in existence in Madurai between 1335 to 1378, a little over forty-three years. During these years, the Pandyas

should have left Madurai and settled in the south. Hence the Pandyas should have moved south. The descendants of the Madurai Pandyas settled at Tenkasi and few other chieftains of the family spread over the south carving principalities for themselves. There are no inscriptions of Pandyas in the second half of the 14th century, in and around Madurai. Sri Ganga Devi says in her Madura Vijayam, that the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras and Vira Ballala had been vanquished by the Sultan. (*Madurai Vijayam* concluding canto-verse No. 25.)

3.3 The end of Pandya rule can therefore be taken to have come to an end at Madurai in 1335. But they held part of Ramnad District, and South Tirunelveli District. Inscriptional evidence points out to Ko-Maravarman Vira Pandyadeva ruling in 31st year when "Kampana Udaiyar came from the north and appointed several Nayakas and restored peace and order[6]." He ruled between 1340 and 1380. His inscription does not refer to the suzeranity of Vijayanagar over him A succession of rulers of the Pandyan dynasty ruled in the Tirunelveli District with their capital at Tenkasi. According to inscriptional evidence, scholars conclude that between the year 1371 to 1422, five rulers[7] were ruling and issuing the inscriptions found at Kottar, Karivalamvandanallur, Courtallam and Tiruppattur. They bore the titles of the Pandyas of the middleages—Komaran and Jatila-Varman. None of their inscriptions found in the Tirunelveli District points out to their having been subject to the overlord-ship of Vijayanagar. It is

moot question to ask if these Pandyas ruled tin succession or conjointly or individually over separate territories. Most probably they are referred to as Pancha Pandya in folk ballads.

3 4 There was no conflict between the Kannada rulers of Vijayanagar and Pandyas of Tenkasi, between A.D. 1371 and 1422. Between 1422 and 1463 Arikesari Parakrama Pandya ruled over the Southern Pandya region with Tenkasi as his capital. His inscriptions are numerous and his fame rests as the buildor of Visvanatha Temple at Tenkasi. He was a contemporary of Devaraya II of Vijayanagar. The records of Arikesari follows the method of the ancient Pandyas. There is no reference in them to the Vijayanagar rulers. There are no Vijayanagar inscriptions before A. D. 1499. Hence Arikesari was not a fedutory of Vijayanagar.

3.5 *Narasa Nayak and Pandyas of Tenkasi.* Saluva Narasimha ascended the Vijayanagar throne after a coup d'etat helped by his general Narasımha Nayaka in about 1485. Narasa Nayak was sent to subdue the rebles in the south and to annex the hitherto independent kingdoms of the Pandyas in the south. Saluva Narasimha wanted to consolidate the south, so that he could present a firm opposition against the southward drive of the Muslim Kingdoms of Bahmani, Bijapur and Golconda. An inscription of Narasa Nayaka says " conquering Chera, Cola, *Pandya* and *Manabushana*, the king of Madurai as well as fierce Turushka ". There was no Cola king of the ancient dynasty reigning then. Cola refers of the Mandalesvara of

Cola-mandalam, Koneriraja, who under disturbed conditions in VIjayanagar asserted his independence. It was one of the objects of Narasa Nayak's expedition to remove him from power. We are interested to know who the Pandya ruler defeated by Narasa Nayaka was. It was Jatavarman Kulesekara Parakrama–Pandya who ascended the throne in 1480. He was forced to pay tribute to Vijayanagar from 1481 ; He continued to rule till 1507. A local tradition has it that 'Pancha Pandian' refers to rulers of Tenkasi. Then may we conclude that the earliest of the ballads refers to Manabushana as the Pandya, and Narasa Nayaka the invader ? But then a few difficulties crop up.

3.6 *Battle of Tambra Parani.* Manabushana was not killed. He only became a feudatory of the Vijayanagar rulers. There is no mention of marriage of the daughter of Kannada invader to the son of the Pandya ruler. There was no duel, and no capture of the youngest brother. Again the site of the battle mentioned in the ballads are Valliyoor and Kayatar and not Tenkasi where Manabushana ruled.

3.7 An expedition led by Salakaraja Chinna Thirumala during the reign of Achuta Raja came to the south to crush the formidable challange to the empire by the combination of Saluva Nayaka Chellappa, Thumbichi Nayaka, the governors of the Tamil country and the Raja of Tirvandrum Bhutalavira Uthayamarthandan. Bhuthalavira besieged Kalakad, Ambasamudram and other fertile villages from the Pandyan territory by

force, and made him flee from Tenkasi. The Pandya, Jatila Sri Vallabha Tribhuvana Sri Vallabha, appealed to Achyutaraya. After the battle of Tambraparani, the Pandya ruler was reinstated and the territories he had lost were restored. On this occasion Achyuta Raya married a Pandyan princess.

3.8 *The result of Narasa Nayak's expedition.* This expedition was intended to help the Pandya against his enemy and ended in his restoration to the throne and establishing close relations between Pandyas and Vijayanagar rulers through marriage. The battle of Tambraparani took place in the year 1532.

3.9 *Vithalaraya's campaign and Vettumperumal.* Taking advantage of the struggle for ascension at Vijayanagar, the ruler of Tirvandrum rose against the overlordship of Vijayangar and an expedition was sent under Vithalaraya in June 1544. It was sent under the leadership of Vithalarara by Sadasiva Raya, the Vijayanagar Emperor. The Trivandrum ruler interfered in the affairs of the Pandyan chieftains of Tenkasi and Kayatar. The Pandyan chieftaincy seems to have been divided into two, one with its seat at Tenkasi and the other at Kayatar. The chieftaincy at Kayatar was ruled over by Vettumperumal Raja.[8]. These two chieftains were frequently at war. Vettumperumal Raja and the ruler of Tiravancore harassed the Pandya of Tenkasi and he appealed to Vithala Raya for help. Vettumperumal was deafeated by Vithala Raya and he ruled from Kayatar and sought protection under

Unnikerla Varman, the king Venad. Again he raised a revolt after a few years. Chinna Thimma marched against Unnikerala varman who he submitted to him. But Vettumperumal showed no signs of submission. He was again defeated in battle and taken prisoner. The inscription noted in the foot-note enables us to identify Vengala Raja with Vithala Raja.

3-10 This account more or less accords with the events narrated in the story of the ballad. Vettumperumal is mentioned in the ballads as one of the Pancha Pandyas. The Kannada invader defeated him. Before his final defeat, terms of peace were offered to him. But he rejected them and fought to the end. There are different versions about the fate of Vettumperumal. He was either captured or killed. The date of the expedition is 1544. The date of the Ilavelangal inscription is 1547. There the death of Vettumperumal is mentioned.

4.1 There is also mention of a battle between 'five Pandyas' Visvanatha Nayaka, in '*Madurai Tala Varalaru*' and the chronicle, "*Karnataka rulers in Pandya Mandala*" Arayanatha Mudaliar, the Dalavoi of Visvanatha was unable to bring under subjugation the five Pandyas holding out in the south from five fortresses. He appealed to Visvanatha Nayaka to come down on them with a large force, whofhimself came down and a fierce battle took place for six months. Unable to win complete victory over the Pandyas, Visvanatha offered to fight eaeh one of them in a duel and the offer was accepted. The Pandyas died in the duel. Thus the last challange to the overlordship of Vijayanagar ended.[9]

This version is not corrobotated by inscriptional evidence. No text of any ballad narrating the story as outlined above is available. But traditional caste histories persistently mention this story. Hence a battle between Kayatar Pandyas and Visvanatha Nayak cannot be ruled out as fiction.

All the ballads mention duels as means of settling the dispute. There is no mention of duels in the chronicles or in inscriptions. I believe that the duel is introduced in the ballads in imitation of the poetic description of the duel between the Turushka ruler and Kampanna in '*Madura Vijayam*'.[10] All ballads invariably mention it, in the manner of old epics and later poems of war and heroism.

4.2 *Conclusion.* We are now in a position to answer the questions raised at the begining of section 3.1 above.

(1) The Kannada invader who came into clash with the Tenkasi Pandya was Narasa Nayaka 1507 and those with the Kayatar Pandya were Vithala Raya and Chinna Thimma. After the consolidation of Vijayanagar overlordship over the south and with the founding of the Nayakship at Madura and organisation of Palayams in Pandya Mandalam, Visvanatha Nayaka had to fight against the Kayatar Pandya.

(2) The Tenkasi Pandyas on the whole were independent rulers from 1340 to 1487. In 1487 Narasa Nayaka forced the Pandya at Tenkasi to accept the

overlordship of Vijayanagar. There was a battle between the Pandya and Narasa Nayaka. The friendship based on feudatory relationship was sealed by the marriage of the Pandya princess with Sadasivaraya. That is the only direct clash heard of in history between Tenkasi Pandyas and the Vijayanagar Emperors. Hence the Pandyas of Tenkasi could not have been thought of as Pancha Pandyas of the ballads.

(3) We do not know the origin of the Pandyas of Kayatar. They had allied themselves with the enemies of Vijayanagar and raised a revolt against it. They had also harassed the Tenkasi Pandyas, perhaps with the object of becoming the only Pandya rulers of the south annexing the western and eastern Pandya territories into one Kingdom.

4.3 Ballads are neither chronicles, nor historical works. They are only stories of heroism based on folk memory of the events of history. They have to be looked up as folk interpretation of events of history.

Ramappayyan Ammanai

4.4 We shall now take up the second group of ballads. Ramappa Ayyan Ammanai is a long ballad dealing with Thirumalai Nayak's war with Sadaikka Thevar II, alias Dalevoi Sethupathi. The Sethupathi committed many acts of insubordination to the Nayak. He was suspected of also harbouring a design to become an independent ruler, following the precedent of the Nayak himself. The solidarity of the Nayak Kingdom was threatened. Thirumalai sent Ramappa Ayyan, his

Brahmin General to subjugate Sadaikka, and bring him in chains to Madurai. Sadaikka learned of the departure of Nayak troops for Ramnad and summoned a council of war. Vannya Thevan, Alagan, Kumara Alagan, Vicu Kondai Thevan and other trusted lieutenants discussed plans of defence of their country and agreed that Vannya should be charged with the supereme command of the Ramnad forces. On the first day of battle Ramappa Ayyan lost heavily and this made him furious. At Pogalur there was a second engagement and in this too Ramappa lost heavily. Six Palayakarars were slain by Vannyan After three or four unsuccessful attacks on the Ramnad forces, Ramappayyan was recalled to Madura to be despatched with an army to go to the help of Venkatapathy Raya, to repulse a Muslim attack. Ramappa Ayyan met the invaders and inflicted a severe defeat on them. He returned again and proceeded against Vannyan. He was cruel in his treatment of the lieutenants and also prisoners. Ramappa Ayyan pushed forward with his forces. The Vannyan retreated to the islands in the Mannar Gulf and from their attacked the army of Ramappa. Ramayyan entered into negotiations with the Dutch in Ceylon and with their help landed on the islands and finally defeated Vannya. Sadaikka was arrested and taken before Thirumala. He was consigned to the prison. But hearing from the guards that the fetters had snapped miraculously, Thirumala released him made friends wtth him and sent him back to Ramnad.

The ballad closely follows history except in minor particulars. The supernatural element introduced at the end of the ballad is incredible. The real reason why Thirumala made peace with Sadaikka was in concern for peace and co-operation with the majority community in his dominion. This master stroke of diplomacy won for him a faithful ally who helped him to drive away the the mysore invaders and inflict a heavy defeat on them.

4.6 *'Iravikutti Pillai Por'*. Another ballad about Ramayyan is 'Iravikutty Pillai Por'. It deals with the campaign of Ramappa against the 'Vanji' Ruler. Iravikutti Pillai, the general of the Nair forces, opposed the march of Ramappa into Tiruvadi Rajyam. He fell in the attempt due to the treachery of the Pillaimars of the 'eight houses'. Iravi's head was severed and taken to Ramappa. The Vanji ruler requested him to send the head to be cremated. Ramappa agreed and the head was sent back. The body and the head was cremated with full military honours.

This ballad is a page from the history of south Travancore. Inscriptions of the period refer to the invasion of Nayak forces into Nanjinad and the ravanges caused by the war and remission of taxes ordered by the ruller. [11]

5.1 Incidents of history for over a century find no reflection in ballads. The next historical period referred to is the "Khan, Saheb Shandai" (the wars of Khan Saheb) and "Poolu Thevan Sindu" (1752 to 1764).

5.2 *The Ballad about Khan Saheb.* "Khan Saheb Chandai" has for its theme, the fortunes of Khan Saheb during the last seven years of his life. The circumstances of his early life are briefly told in the first part of the ballad. Born in Panaiyur, he was brought up by Musa Lawley. Then he joined the service of Brittaine. He learned English and joined the service of the Nawab Mohamed Ali. Step by step he rose to be a Commander in his army. His services were placed under the British Commander. He won many battles for them against the French. He married a Ferunghi girl, Masha.

5.3 Pleased with his meritorious services, the Company appointed him commander at Madurai to undertake an expedition in Madurai to collect the revenues due to the Nawab of Arcot. Then leased out to the British Company. He collected revenues from many Palayams and brought rebellious Polygars under subjection. The Sivaganga polygar did not pay homage to him. He addressed a letter to Dalavoy Thandavaroyan demanding the cession of Tirupuvanam to him. The Dalavoy tried to please Khan Saheb with sweet words and costly presents to Masha. All that was of no avail and Khan Saheb could not be persuaded to give up his desire to grab part of Sivaganga territory.

5.4 Thandavaroyan, met Muthuvadugan the chief of Sivaganga and reported to him the danger of Khan Saheb's invasion of Sivaganga. He persuaded him to leave Sivaganga and take refuge at the fortress of

Kalaiyarkovil. He alerted the Marava chieftains friendly to Sivaganga and left for Arcot, to seek an audience with mohamed ali the Nawab of arcot. He arrived in Arcot with a huge retinue and sought an interview with the Nawab. After a few days the Nawab granted him an interview The Dalavoy laid a long list of charges on Khan Saheb before the Nawab. He had misappropriated the moneys paid as revenues by polygars and was trying to sieze villages under freindly palayams and keep them directly under his control. The Nawab was displeased with Khan Saheb for several reasons. He had not received the revenue collected by the Khan Saheb from the Palayakarars for six years. He had also received news that Khan Saheb was forging secret alliances with his enemies. He had taken Marchand a French armourer under is protection and was manufacturing canons. All these acts were designed to assert his independence throwing off his allegiance to the Nawab. The English had agreed to place him under the direct service of the Nawab which Khan Saheb resented and refused to carry out the command of the Nawab. Hence he decided to send an army against Khan Saheb for removing him from he post of governorship of Madurai.

5.6 The combined forces of the Nawab and the Company, were sent to Madura under the command of Britain. They reached Thirupuvanam to defend the town from the attack of Khan Saheb. He harassed the Nawab's troops by night and withdrew before day dawned. The hordes of the Nawab marched to Madurai and laid seige to it. After many unsuccessful attempts to

capture the city, they succeeded in making a breach in the fort-walls which was immediately repaired. The seige lasted for six months. Then the British Commander resorted to bribing the Dalavoy Srinivasa Rao and Marchand, the French armourer, and capturing Khan Saheb alive. He was led out of the fort and hanged on a mango tree.

Historical Background of the Ballad

5.7 It is necessary to get a glimpse of the political situation of the Madura Subha (consistiug of roughly the modern districts of Madura, Ramnad and Tinnevelly) to realise the significance of the career of Khan Saheb. The ballad tells us about the last years of his career. His victories over the Polygars of Tirunelveli had made him so powerful that the Company suspected that his intention was to throw off the yoke of his masters.

Rise of Khan Saheb

5.8 At the beginning of his career he won victory over the French for the English and dislodged the French from Parangipettai. The affairs of the south were in utter confusion and he was sent to the South to set matters right. Then the whole of the South was involved in a struggle between the two rivals, Chanda Saheb and Mohamed Ali for the Nawabship of Arcot. Fleeing to Trichy Mohemed Ali proclaimed himself Nawab. The French and the English took sides in the conflict.

the former supporting Chanda Saheb and the latter Mohamed Ali. And from this time begins what was in effect a struggle between the European countries for the mastery of the Carnatic.

Affaiars of Tirunelveli

5.9 To make sure of the adherence of the people of Tirunelveli, Mohamed Ali despatched to the district a force of few thousand men under the command of Abdul Rahim. A similar detachment of the English soldiers under the Lt. Innis joined the troops of Rahim At that time an adventurer named Alam held the city of Madura in the name of Chanda Saheb. Captain Cope in the command of a force of Europeans and sepoys attempted to regain Madura but was repulsed. Finally, in 1755 Col. Heron and Mafus Khan, the nawab's elder brother at the head of 2,000 sepoys and 500 soldiers advanced towards Madura. Madura fell without a blow. The Raja of Ramnad submitted, surrendering to the Company two sea-ports on the eastern coast. They proceeded South and took Tirunelveli without opposition. Renters in Tirunelveli and surrounding areas gave in their submissions. Many of the poligars rejected the demands to tribute made in the name of the Nawab. Chief among them being Kattabomman Nayakan of Panchalam Kuruchi. An attempt was made to reduce his stronghold, but had to be abandoned as the whole force was immediately recalled to Trichinopoly. On his way back Col. Heron made a diversion towards the fort of Nelkattanseval

the headquarters of Pulithevan-the leading poligar of the West.

Col. Heron's Campaigns.

5.10 The attempt proved a failure and the force withdrew to Madura. The revenues collected by means of this expedition had not been sufficient to cover his expenses. And finally Col. Heron was induced by a large present to rent the countries of Madura and Tirunelveli for a small sum of 15 lakhs of Rupees. On his return to Madras Col. Heron was tried by Court Martial on a charge of bribery and dismissed from service. On Heron's departure the Marava polygars of the west at once made up their minds to revolt. They were assisted by pathan soldiers who had been stationed in the southern countries as the representatives of Chanda Saheb. The King of Travancore sent a force of 2,000 Nayars who Joined the united rebel forces, at Kalakad. In 1766 Mahfuz Khan's troops were defeated by the Travancore forces.

Puli Thevan the leader of the confederates.

5.11 The leader among the polygards of the west now approached Kattabomman Nayakan for joining the resistence against the Nawab but he refused. The confederates joining forces with the poligars of Madura concentrated their forces on Srivilliputur. The united forces of the poligars now numbered 24,000

men. Srivilliputur was taken and reduced. Mahfuzkhan won over Kattabommanayakan and Ettappanannayakan. And their joint forces met Pulithevan's troops seven miles north of Tirunelveli which resulted in the defeat of Pulitheven and his confederates.

Khan Saheb arrives.

5.12 It was at this juncture that Yusuf Khan arrived in May 1756 with a mixed force which included a detachment of artillery. The commanders were unable to collect sufficient money to maintain the troops. Overcoming the difficulties they proceeded to Srivilliputhur, recaptured the fort and renewed the submission of most of the poligars including Puli Thevan himself.

His Campaigns.

5.13 Khan Saheb left a garrison at Srivilliputhur and returned to Tirunelveli. He found that the Nawab had handed over the management of Tirunelveli district for an annual rental of eleven lakhs of rupees to a Mudaliar. Mahfuz Khan still considered himself renter, and friction developed between them The Mudaliar turned to Puli Thevan for help. Puli Thevan effected a reconcialisation between the Mudaliar and Mahfuz Khan. Yusuf Khan demanded from the Mudaliar money for payment of the Nawab's troops. The Mudaliar refused to pay Khan Saheb and he was thrown into prison. The Polygars of the west came to

his rescue and set him at liberty. Yusuf Khan hurried to the scene and met the united forces of the Polygars. He inflicted a severe defeat on them.

Disturbed conditions.

5.14 But Puli Thevan and his allies were not disheartened by their defeat. They opened negotiation. with Hyder Ali who was then encamped at Dindigul. Madura was in the hands of Alam Khan, now an ally of Mahfuz Khan. The position of the English appeared serious. Realising the vital necessity of securing Madura, the company sent Yusuf Khan there with troops. Meanwhile Mahfuz Khan had joined the confederacy headed by Puli Thevan and took the field against Khan Saheb. He announced in a proclamation that he was the Nawab's renter. The confederates obtained assurance of support from Travancore ruler, surrendering Kalakad and its neighbourhood to him. They stormed the British stronghold, Palayamkottai. The British soldiers at Palayamkottai with the aid of Panchalamkurichi and Ettayapuram obliged them to retreat.

Shrewedness of Yusuf.

5.15 When Yusuf Khan returned to Tirunelveli, he found many forces combined against him. He negotiated with Travancore and agreed to respect the rights of the ruler in Kalakad. Just then he was called

back, to Madras to lead an army against the French who were laying seige to Madras.

Confederates grow Powerful.

5.16 Puli Thevan turned the absence of Yusuf Khan to his advantage. He effected an alliance between the Polygars of the west and the east, which was rendered easy by the death of Kattabomman Nayaka, who was unfriendly to Puli Thevan. His son declared himself from the outset as the enemy of the British. The aim of the alliance was to oust. British power out of the Southern Part of Tamilnad.

Yusuf Khan's success.

5.17 Yusuf returned to Tirunelveli in 1759. He directed his efforts to disrupt the confederacy. He weaned away the Travancore ruler by confirming his earlier agreement with him. He undertook a series of operations one after another. He captured Kollangondan, a fort under the occupation of Puli Thevan in the west. He turned east and took Kolvarpatti, a fortress in the west. He turned west and occupied Surandai. The Travancore troops were pillaging the country in the area around Kalakad. He entered into alliance with them and not only turned them away from the confederacy but secured their help to Puli Thevan and his allies. Then he marched to Vadagari and captured the fort. The Polygar fled to Vasudevanallur. It was a strong fort

within the Palayam of Puli Theven. It was the centre of activity and the headquarters of the confederates. Many attempts by English commanders to capture that fort had failed. Now Yusuf Khan stormed it. Puli Thevan suddenly appeared from Nelkattan-Seval in the rear. Though Yusuf continued the attack on the fortress, his position became more and more hopeless and Yusuf decided to retire. Just then the Dutch had landed at Tuticorin, which was in their possession and were marching towards Tirunelveli. They took Alwarthiru nagari Their appearance was probably due to the invitationof thePolygars. Yusuf Khan marchedto Alwartiru nagari, but the Dutch had decamped to Tuticorin and thence to Ceylon The successes of Yusuf Khan forced the Polygars to be low. Hence all troubles appeared to have ceased.

Khan Saheb makes himself master at Madura.

5.18 Mohamed Yusuf now claimed that he had reduced Tirunelveli District and took the rental of the district for the low sum of seven lakhs of rupees a year. Mahfuz Khan effected a reconciliation with his brother, the Nawab and left the district for good. The position of Yusuf Khan was very strong and he was suspected of disloyalty to the British Company. He was enlisting troops in Tanjore and was negotiating with his erstwhile enemies an alliance against the Nawab. The forces at his command were estimated

at 27,000 men. He was receiving reinforcements from Haidar and the French. He behaved as if he was an independent ruler and issued inscriptions granting lands to mosques and temples. He carried out irrigation works in Tirunelveli and Madurai districts. It is not known whether Puli Thevan and his allies accepted his offers of friendship. They had suffered at hii hands and perhaps their animosity for him lasted till Yusuf met with his death.

Seige of Madura.

5.19 A strong force of the Nawab and the Company was equipped and despatched to Madura under Colonel Mansar. After protracted seige the fort was taken on the 14th of October 1764. Yusuf Khan was captured and hanged.

The heroes of the ballad.

5.20 The ballad tells us briefly aetivities of Yusuf Khan and his compaign against the French. His military activities against the Polygars of Tirunelvels is not narrated. The ballad restricts itself to the events of the last days of his career. The hero of the ballad is not Khan Saheb, but Thandavarayan who is said to have persuaded the Nawab and the Company to lead an army against him and captured Madura. He was not prepared militarilly to resist Khan Saheb. Hence he undertook a journey to Arcot to

seek an interview with the Nawab. He is portrayed as a wily scheming politician who outwits everyone who comes up against him. It is he who opens the gates of the Madura fortress with gold. The strength and bravery of the lion is useless before the wiles of the jackal.

The ballad would make us believe that Khan Saheb failed to secure the alliance of the neighbouring countries of Ramnad and Sivagangai since he cast his greedy eyes on .fertile villages in those territories He had already earned the hatred of the Tirunelveli polygars througn his campaigns against them. Hence when he was attacked no one rallied to his support. The ballad gives unstinted praise for the military successes of Khan Saheb. There is a note of herision while describing the defects of the English Commanders. Next to Thandavarayan the ballad looks upon Khan Saheb with admiration and sympathy. The ballad treats of a battle and so leaders of armies have naturally to be given important roles in the story. Hence Khan Saheb becomes the hero though the ballad singer is unaware of it.

How does the ballad portray Puli Thevan.

5.21 We have pointed out the important part Puli Thevan played in the affairs of the south. We hear of him in the ballad. He plays a disgraceful role as a servant to the Nawab. It was he who had posed a

formidable challange to the Nawab and the British and it is against all facts of history that the ballad assigns to him the role of a s ubservient slave. Puli Thevan advises the Nawab not to grant an audience to Thandavarayan. Thandavarayan refers to him as a despicable wretch who had proved treacherous to the native polygars. History tells us that Puli Thevan defended his Vasudevanallur fort in 1767, three years after the death of Khan Saheb, against the attacks of the troops under Colonel Campbell. The fortress was captured but nothing is known about the fate of Puli Thevan. British records and historians of the period are silent about it.

Contribution to History.

5.22 The contribution of the ballad to history is that it tells us of the role played by the palayams of Ramnad and Sivaganga in the war between the British and Khan Saheb and the capture of Madura from him.

No ballad about Puli Thevan available.

5.23 Parts of a ballad describing the exploits of Khan Saheb in the Tirunelveli District are sung in some parts of the district. But manuscripts of the ballad are not available. I learn that a ballad about Puli Thevan is available in manuscript form but I have not seen it.

Ballads about Marudhus.

6.0 After the death of Khan Saheb, opposition to the rise of British power in the south came from the Polygars of Sivaganga. The struggle of the Marudhu brothers, the elder of whom ruled over Sivaganga from 1780 to 1801, against the British, forms the theme of two ballads, Sivaganga Ammanai and Sivaganga Kummi. These two ballads are available in book-forms, published by the Oriental Manuscripts Library Government of Madras.

Summary of the story.

6.1 The story told by the ballads is as follows. The Polygar of Sivaganga Muthu Vaduganathan, named Velu Nachiar the daughter of the Sethupathi of Ramnad. The Marudhu brothers, Vellai Marudhu the elder and Chinna Marudhu, the younger, who were in the service of the Ramnad ruler were sent with the princess to serve under Muthu Vaduganathan. The elder brother was appointed to the post of 'adaippam', the personal secretary to the Polygar. The younger Brother was appointed to a high civil officer. They served the polygar loyally and won his confidence. The Sivaganga country had a spell of prosperity and peace under the rule of Muthu Vaduganathan assisted by the Marudhus.

In 1772 General Smith was sent to reduce Ramnad and Sivaganga rulers to subjection and to collect rent

due to the Nawab from them. The resistance of Ramnad was broken and the 9 year old ruler was captured and sent with his mother to Trichy and imprisoned. Smith did not turn his attention to Sivaganga. The reason was that Muthu Vaduganathan had rallied a strong force under the Marudhus and had the support of his subjects. He would offer stiff resistance to any invasion.

6.2 After consolidating his victory over Ramnad, and obtaining supplies and troops from Trichy he marched on Sivaganga. The Thondaiman of Pudukottah sent a detachment of troops to assist Smith. The combined forces crossed the boundary of Sivaganga and a fierce battle took place. The polygar, Marudhu and Velu Nachiar took the field and led the Sivaganga forces. The polygar was wounded. The Marudhus suggested that they withdraw and resume the battle after getting reinforcements Promised by Haidar. Muthu Vadugan would not hear of it. He asked Marudhus to save Velu Nachiar and take her to Dindigul and to attack the British troops when a favourable opportunity arose. The Marudhus disguised themselves as palanquin bearers and carried their queen away to Dindigul, engaging other beare s on the way. Sivaganga fell to the British and the civil administiation was entrusted to officers of the Nawab.

6.3 Leaving the queen in a safe place, the Marudhus became active on the borders of Sivaganga. They met leaders of the people and led them in

guerilla attacks on Nawab's troops. Nawab's civil officers were slain, the tax collectors had to flee for their lives. Taxes could not be collected and the orders of the Nawab could not be enforced. Grain collected by force as rent and stored in granaries was looted and the guards killed. These activities were well planned and well directed. People paid taxes to the Queen and this money was spent in recruiting fighting men and getting supplies in the preparation for a war. Unable to enforce order the Nawab's troops withdrew and Velu Nachiar returned to Sivaganga. She was installed as Rani and the Peria Marudhu became defacto ruler. Chinna Marudhu took charge of civil administration.

6.4 Velu Nachiar was a Marava princess. The Marudhus were Agambadaiyars. The relatives of her husband aspired for the gadi of Sivaganga. But Velu Nachiar married Vellai Marudhu and put at rest all claims to the gadi by the 'Dayathis' of Muthu Vadugant Then Marudhu became the Raja of Sivaganga. He opposed all interference of the company in the affairs of Sivaganga, He helped all palayams ranged against the British. He ruled for twenty years and issued many inscriptions. He made grants to temples, churches and mosques. He built rest houses and dug wells. He patronised arts and letters and twenty seven poets flourished in his court.

6.5 Velu Nachiar died in 1800. The first battle of Panchalamkurichi was over and Kattabomman had been hanged. Oomaidurai, who was imprisoned escaped and rebuilt the fort. The second battle of Panchalamkurichi ended with the capture of the fort. Again Oomaidurai escaped and arrived in Sivaganga.

6.6 Within five days after the fall of Panchalamkurichi, the British troops marched against Sivaganga. The British forces Crossed the border. A battle took place at Kamuthi. A series of battles were fought at Tirupuvanam, Parthipanoor and Ramnad. The British commander found Siruvayal, a beautiful town in flames as they entered it. Marudhus had followed the policy of scorched earth. The Marudhus retreated to Kalayarkoil a fortress, surrounded by dense forests. The forest was impenetrable. For 32 days the British troops were engaged in cutting down trees and attempting to lay a road. They could not advance an inch due to surprise attacks.

6.7 The British forces were assisted by the Thondaiman of Pudukottai and the Polygar of Ettayapuram. Even than the British could not make any head-way. Therefore they attempted to split the ranks of the Sivaganga troops. They caught hold of a claimant to the gadi of Sivaganga, Udayana Thevan by name and problaimed him Raja of Sivaganga. He was a Marava and Maravas were thus weaned away

from supporting Marudhu. Rumours were circulated that Marudhu had hidden away gold under the roots of trees in the Kalaiyarkoil forest. Greedy men came forward to cut down the trees to find treasure. Thus the forest was cleared. The defence of Kalaiyarkoil became difficult. The British troops advanced towards Kalaiyarkoil. It fell to them after a battle. But the Marudhus and Oomaidurai made good their escape with a band of loyal chieftains. They were captured in the forest adjoining Kalaiyarkoil. The Marudhu brothers and Chinna Marudhu's son Sivagnanam were hanged at Thirupattur and Oomaidurai was carried off to Panchalamkurichi and hanged there. Asked to express his last wish Marudhu said that his grants to temples and for charitable purposes should be respected and that his head should be buried before the main entrance to the temple at Kalaiyarkoil. Thus ended the last chapter of the story of resistance to the growing power of the British in the south. [12]

6.8 Comments on the ballads.

The story of the ballads very closely follow the events of history Even the names of those who took part in the battles are mentioned faithfully The history of Sivaganga reconstructed from the inscriptions of Marudhu, the records of the Company and the memoirs of Colonel Welsh, who participated in the war of Sivaganga, differs very little from the story ballads. But the ballads give a sympathetic picture of Marudhu. He was a wise ruler and a valiant fighter. He was an

inveterate enemy of the British. He realised the necessity to gain the willing support of the people by his good deeds. His character has won the admiration even of his enemies like Colonel Welsh and Orme. They are unstinting in their praise of Marudhus.

6.9 The ballads are good sources of corroboration of details of history. It does not indulge in fanciful exaggeration nor simulative praise for their hero. The Marudhus and Oomaidurai were the last representatives of the resistance movement against British power in the eighteenth century.

Ballads of Kattabomman.

7.0 Kattabomman's story is well known in Tirunelveli region. Different versions are known. A version printed in 1929, is a folk play in verse. The verses are used as dialogues in folk dramas. Since these plays are staged before Telugu knowing audiences, a few speeches are in colloquial Telugu mixed with Tamil words. The old versions which arose a few years after the events occured are close to historical facts.[13]

The new ballad.

7.1 Recent version of the story narrates the history of the immigration of the forefathers of Kattabomman from Bellary district. There was a drought and a famine broke out. The shepherds of Bellary left their villages and moved south towards Koilpatti. A few months later their chieftain Chella Bommu Naicker also left his village

with his wife and children and travelled south. He joined his followers who had settled at Chekkarakudi and grazed his cattle on the pasture land near Kurumalai.

The request was granted and Chellabommu was requested to pay a tribute of one pot of milk and a ram every month. Chellabommu died and his son Konda Bommu succeeded hin to the chieftaincy of the Thokkilavar Settlement. [14] The subject of Chellabommu's community of Kambalathar was known by that name. Kondabommu had six children. Their names as given by the ballad are "Kattabommu Oomadurai, Vellaiammal Veeramallu, Thimmu, Panjali, Veerajakku and Bommu."

7.2 When Kattabommu had grown into youth, his father took him and his brother to pay their homage to Ettappan, the Raja of Ettayapuram. The boys did not p ostrate before their overlord. Ettappan grew angry and spoke words full of scorn and arrogance. Kattabommu talked back and left without paying the tributes leaving the Raja sectining in impotent anger. He remained a life long enemy of Kattabommu.

7.3 After the death of his father Kattabomman succeeded to the chieftaincy. He chose a place to build a fort. This was the where a hare in pursuit had turned against hounds and chased them away. The earth was thought of having magical properties of infusing heroic qualities in men settling on it Thus Panchalakumrichi fort was bu:lt. He gathered around himself thousands of faithful armed men and appointed Vellaiyan a val'ant

youth as the commander. He appointed a shrewd Vellala Subramania Pillai as his minister (Thanapathi). Young men who had distinguisehed in many physical feats came to join his army.

7.4 The polygars of the neighbouring palayams led by the Raja of Ettayapuram sent petitions to the East India Company charging Kattabommu of many offences. They hinted broadly that British power would receive a set back if his strength was allowed to grow unchecked. The complaint was forwarded to Jackson, Collector of Peshkush revenue with his headquarters at Ramanathapuram. He summoned Kattabommu to appear before him at his camp at Courtallam. Kattabommu came with a large retinue to Courtallam. The Collector refused to meet him there and went from place to place dragging the polygar after him, promising to meet him at his next camp. Finally he granted Kattabommu an interview at Ramanathapuram. The interview was in the nature of an enquiry or trial and Kattabommu answered Jackson's questions with impudence. The conversation between Jackson and Kattabommu as related by the ballad reveals what Kattabommu thought of the rights of the Company to interrogate him as an accused person. Here is a sample.

Jackson - Who ceded to you Arumugamangalam?
Kattabommu - I gave it to myself. Who should cede it to me?

Jackson - Why did you seize 500 sheafs of corn in Arungulam?

Kattabommu - I seized it to feed the birds; is it theft or robbery ?

Jackson - Why did you lift the cows belonging to Ettayapuram Zamin?

Kottabommu - I drove them home to get supply of milk to my children.

Jackson - Why have not you paid tribute (Peshkush) for the last seven years?

Kattabommu - The Heaven showers rain, the earth gives corn, why should I pay for my land ?

Do you collect tribute to command the elements?

Does rains shower at your command?

Enraged Jackson, ordered his sepoys to arrest Kattabommu. He foiled the attempt to arrest him by stabbing two adjutants who dared to lay their hands on him. His brother and friends waiting at the gates of Jackson's bungalow helped him to escape. The Thanapathi was captured and sent to Trichy to be interrogated by officers of the Company. On hearing his report the Company decided to sack Jackson and drop charges against Kattabommu. Thanapathi returned to Panchalankurichi and reported what had happened at Trichy.

7.5 He then expressed his wish to celebrate his marriage of his son and demanded money and paddy. He suggested thai they could loot the granaries at Srivaikuntam where the Company had stored paddy collected from Polygars as peshkush. With the ruler's tacit consent the granary was looted and its guard Karuppa Thevan killed. The news reached Palayamkottai, garrison headquarters of the region. Major Maculay, the commandant could not take any punitive action on the Palayam. He reported the incident to the Company headquarters, Captain Collins was sent with a detachment to reduce Panchalankurichi. In the battle that followed Vellaiya Thevan fought bravely killing Collins. But he too died from a bullet shot.

7.6 Disheartened, Kattabommu, left the For with his brother and brothers in law in search of a good commander. None of the polygars dared to help him. Finally, they were captured by the Thondaiman of Pudukottai and handed over to Major Agnew. Kattabommu was hanged at Kayatar.

Oomaidurai escaped and lived in hiding at Kannivadi. He was captured and imprisoned at Palayamkottai. Muthappa Naicken helped him to break open the prisont and escape. The Kambalathars rallied round him and the cld fort was rebuilt. Col. Agnew laid seige to the fort and breached its walts Oomaidurai escaped and joined the Marudhus and fought against Brttish troops. Col. Agnew attempted to capture him, but he committed suicide.

The old ballad

7.7 The old ballad begins the story with the arrival of Jackson at Ramanathapuram. He issued summons to all the Polygars to meet him. All of them cbeyed hls command save only Kattabommu. Jackson sent a special messenger with an order to Kattabommu that he should meet him at Courtallam. Kattbommu arrived in Courtallam with a large retinue. Then The story narrates events Just as the new ballad till Kattabommu's minister returns from Trichy. The graneries are looted with the knowledge and permission of Kattabommu. Macaulay wrote to the Headquarters and Major Collins was sent to take the fort of Panchalamkurichi The first battle of Panchalamkurichi is described in about a hundred lines. Vellaiya Thevan comes out of the fort pretending to have been sent out by Kattabommu for having demanded arreas of his pay. He woodwinkes Major Collins, gather military secrets of the enemys and escaped to the fort. In the first battle both Major Collins and Vellaiyan dies. Kattabommu and his brother issue out of the fort and buy Vellayan's body. Theny they go back to the fort. The Company force then withdrew.

7.8 After a few months another detachment was sent under Agnew to capture the fort. This battle is also described at length. Towards the close of the battle, Kattabommu, Oomaidurai and other chieftains abandoned the fort and fled towards the north The British commander had warned all the polygars of grave consequences in

case they should help Kattabommu. They arrive in Pudukottai. The Thondaiman prentended to welcome them warmly, but entestained treacherous tntentions. He informed the British Commander of the arrival of Kattabommu at Pudukottai. The Commander arrived in hot haste and the Thondaiman made them over to him.

7.9 Kattabommu was taken to Kayatar and hanged. Oomaidurai was consigned to the prison at Palayamkottai. He smuggled a letter to his uncle Pulikutti Nayakan to make efforts to storm the prison and set him free. A few hundred men were mustered and Pulikutti Nayakan entered Palayamkottai. They disguised themselves as wood–cutters, earrying head-loads of fire-wood and went about as if they were engaged in selling fire-wood. At night, they gathered before the prison gates and asked the permission of the guard to sleep near the gates. He agreed to allow them to sleep there on condition they would each give him a faggot of wood. They feigned to sleep and at night took hold of the muskets and swords kept hidden in the bundles of fire–wood and dashed through gates. They unchained their leader Oomaidurai and other chiefta ns, issued out of the prlson gates and made such good use of their legs that before morning they reached Panchalankurichi (which was at a distance of 30 mites)

7.10 Major Macaulay collected a force and within six days arrived at Panchalankurichi. Great was his surprise to see the fort of Panchalankurichi standing before him ready to withstand his attack. It had been razed to the ground during the first battle. The insurgents

had built the fort and prepared the defence in six days. Macaulay rashly attempted an assault. Great havoc was done to his ranks. He withdrew. After two months he received reinforcements from Trichy. Colonel Agnew was sent at the head of a strong force. The combined forces attacked the fort and it was abandoned. The defenders escaped. Here the ballad ends abruptly.

The historical background.

7.11 The ballads closely follow htstorical events. The political situation in the Tirunelveli district is describeb in the Tirunelveli Gazetteer as follows. "The year 1781 marks an important epoch in the history of Tirunelveli district and of the Carnatic provinces in general. Towards the close of the year the Nawab assigned by treaty to the East India Company, the manage ment and control of the whole of the district on the condition that he should be allowed one sixth of revenue for his personal use. Superintendents were appointed to the districts to administer them on behalf of the Company and to receive the revenues. Mr. George Proctor was posted in 1781 to Tirunelveli; his management gave general dissatisfaction and in 1783. he was succeeded by Mr. Torin.

7.12 The superintendents were unable to collect any Peshkush from Kattabomma Nayakan, father of the famous Kattabommu, the hero of the ballads. Colonel Fullarton was sent to storm the fort. After a long seige, the defenders abandoned the fort. Fullarton entering

the fort found 40,000 Dutch pagodas, enormous quantities of guns and ammunition and the original of a treaty between Kattabommań and the Dutch Government of Colombo.

7.13 In July 1792 a definite treaty was effected with the Nawab by which Madras Government undertook at their own risk and expense to collect the whole of peshkush from the Polygars and to allow the Nawab credit for this amount in the amount due to him to the company. Mr. Torin was appointed, Collector in the Tirunelveli, Madura, Trichinopoly and Ramanathapuram districts. The dues could be collected only by threat of force and coercion. So Colonel Maxwell was sent with a force to Tirunelveli.

7.14 He found that the centre of disaffection was the Poligar of Panchalankurichi. Almost the whole of the eastern country was at his mercy. As soon as rebellion broke out in Ramanathapuram he was the first to join the insurgeants. His powerful leadership secured a strong following, chief among whom were the poligars fo Nagalapuram, Kadalgudi, Melmandai, Kulathur and Ealayirampannai. Mr. Jackson who succeeded to the post of Collector, realised the importance of settling with Kattabomma Nayakan and summoned him in his headquarters at Ramnad. The incidents that followed the summons is just lhe same as narrated in the old ballad.

The oircumstances in which the heroes played their role.

7.15 How are we assess the role of Kattabomman, Oomaidurai, and the Marudhus who resisted the expanding power of the British towards the close of eighteenth century?

The British Company in India was a part of the capitalist system of Europe. Britain was then the most advanced capitalist country. The Portugese and Dutch who carried a trade with India were less advanced than Britain. Its capacity for investing huge sums of money in buying raw materials and the transport facilities under its command made competition aginst it formidable. The Portugese and the Dutch lost in the competition

7.16 After the disappearance of Nayak rule at Madurai with the deposition of Rani Meenakshi, there was no central authority in the southern parts of Tamilnad. The struggle for Nawabship of Arcot provided an opportunity for the European powers, the French and the English to intervene and strengthen their position in trade and politics. Each polygar desired to make use of this opportunity to grab as much territory for him-elf as his strength would enable him. This resulted in a turmoil. A few Polygars dimly understood that the polygars as a class would disappear if the British are to become masters of the country. They decided to oppose the British against odds. The interests of their class coincided with those of the people. But the people were not politically conscious. Hence a section of the polygars fought doggedly against the superior strength of arms of the British. The leaders of such resistance were the heroes of the ballads. Other polygars considered the neighbouring Polygars as their enemies. They thought that the British power would save them in conditions of anarchy. Hence they submitted to the British. The ballads look upyn them as despicable creatures.

Conclusions.

8.1 Historical ballads provide materials as corroborative evidence to historical facts and also new materials which point to the direction in which research should be pursued. For instance Ramappa Ayyan Ammanai tells us about the involvent of the Dutch in the naval battle at Pamban, which fact is not mentioned by any other source. Again it is helpful to decide whether Thirumalai Nayakan was a feudatory of Vijayanagar. The ballad tells us that Ramayya was ordered to pull out his forces from Ramnad in order to march to the North to help the Raya.

8.2 The ballads throw light on the social and political conditions of the times in which the events occurred. For example, the names of all the Polygars who were adherents of Kattabomman and those who supported the British are listed in the ballad. Names of places where battles were fought are recorded.

8.3 The ballads are not chronicles nor are they historical works. They are folk literary creations, exalting what the folk considered virtues in the heroes of history. They set up a gallary of heroes. Self sacrifice, devotion to a cause, power of endurance, and heroism are held up as noble virtues. These virtues are attributed to the heroes of the ballads.

8,4 These ballads are materials for purposeful entertainment. The stories of heroes of resistance have survived the attempts of the British to wipe off memories of struggles against their domination and kindled the noble sentiment of patriotism.

8.5 The ballads rouse righteous indignation against oppression, tyranny and treachery.

8.6 The folk literary forms received impetus in the period in which these ballads were composed. Various folk literary forms were kept alive and developed such as 'Villupattu' in the southern parts of Tirunelveli District, 'Oyilkummi' in Koilpatti taluk and Madurai District, 'Kolattakkummi' in Ramnad District, 'Sindu' in the western parts of Tirunelveli District and 'Lavani' in Madurai, Trichy and Tanjore Districts.

8.7 I have taken up for study in this paper only a few historical ballads now extant in Tirunelveli and Ramnad Districts. If efforts are made to collect ballads in other districts, a good number of them may be brought to light.

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1. Known as 'Kodai' or gift to the Gods.

2. Examples. Muthuppattan has a temple near Papanasam Dam and Chinnathambi in many places near Panagudi.

2. *Name fo 5 Pandyas.* Kulasekara Perumal, Muthaperumal Makilumperumal, Pandvaperumal.

4. Published in 1947. Second edition. Page 29.

5. Published in 1939 at Srivaikuntam.

6. No. 94 or 1916.

7. Their names as found in the inscriptions are:

(i) Ko-Mara-Varman Vira Pandya Deva (1340–80).

(ii) Ko Jata-Varman Prakrama Pandya Deva (Nagercoil inscription 1356).

(iii) Jatila-Varman Kulasekara Pandyan (Karivalamvandanallur 1402)

(iv) Mara Varman Kulasekara Pandyan (1409) Tenkasi.

(v) Jata Varman Vikrama Pandyan (1469).

8. At Ilavelangal an inscription mentions a battle between Vettumperumal and Vengalaraja. "A Kondaiyankottai Maravan put him to death" date of Inscription is 1547. Tirunelveli District Gazetteer—H.R. Plate—1919. Page 318.

9. This version is quoted in "*Nadar Mannarum Nayaka Mannarum*". Ramalinga Gurukkal. p. 94.

10. Madura Vijayam concluding canto. Versus 26 to 36.

11. Mudaliar Olai. 82 page 59. Appendix to Ramappayyau Ammanai, University of Madras.

12. This account is a summary of the book 'Marudhu Iruvar' —N. Sanjeevi, based on the ballads.

13. The old ballad is available in book-form with introduction and notes. Editor N. Vanamamalai. New Century Book House, Madras.

14. Thokkilavar—a subject of the Kambalathar caste.

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Paper Submitted to the International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies II.

Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Imperialist Rule

0.1 "The vast majority of the population of the Chola country lived in villages and agriculture was their main occupation. Great prestige attached to ownership of land, and everyone whatever his occupation aimed at having a small plot he could call his own. The village was thus primarily a settlement of peasants and its assembly an association of land lords. A periodical redistribution of arable land of a village among its inhabitants prevailed in many parts of the country till comparatively recent times. Besides the landowners great and small, there was a fairly large class of landless labourers, an agrarian proletariat who assisted in the operation and shared the proceeds of agriculture. Some of them were in a condition of serfdom and all of them had less to do with the management of local affairs than the landlords. The artisans of the village had shares from the common land of the village, which were of the nature of retainers or inducements to them not to leave the village. Tenancy cultivation was quite common especially on land belonging to temples and other corporate bodies, the terms of the tenancy being fixed

by either the terms of the original endowment or by separate negotiations in each case ".[1]

0.2 That is the picture given by Prof. K. A. Neelakanta Sastry about the life in the countryside in the dominions of the Cholas. The passage does not give us a clear picture of the relations between the landless proletariat and the small peasant on the one hand and the temples, Brahmins and freeholders who owned most of the land in the countryside on the other hand. Land being the chief means of production in the feudal system, the forms of ownership of land and the forms of employing the labour of the small peasant and landless proletariat in agricultural production determines the relations between the two classes.

1.1 Construction work of huge temples and grant of endowments to them began in the reign of Raja Raja I, though it had started two centuries before him. Before his ascension to the throne, the main form of land proprietorship was 'Vellanvagai', free holdings by peasants and landlords. The construction of temples continued to the reign of Kulothunga III and grants were made to the newly constructed temples. Raja Raja I endowed the Tanjore Temple with lands in 35 villages. Five of them contained lands over 1000 acres in extent. 5 others 500 to 1000 acres 3 of them 200 to 300 and six of them above 50 and below 100.[2] These lands were all made tax free. Such transfer of lands to the temple

1. A history of South India K. A. Neelakanta Sastry, O.U.P. Page 327-328. 2. History of cholas—Rajamanikkanar.

were made by every monarch successively to old as well as newly constructed temples. The example of the monarchs was followed by the officers and generals.

1.2 In whose poseession were these lands before they were assigned in perpetuity to the temples? Inscriptions give an answer to this question.

(1) Fallow lands which could be converted into wet lands were made over to the temple at Maruthikudi. This was to be irrigated by the waters of a tank nearly.[3] Many such grants are recorded in inscriptions of cholas from 1000 – 1125.

(2) All the fallow and wet lands excluding those already assigned to temples, Jainpallis and Brahmins were granted as tax free land to the temple at Nerur.[4] Such records relate to the same period as those mentioned in (1) i.e. 1000 – 1125.

(3) All the wasteland lying around the whole village and also dryland, tank, cultivable land under the irrigation of the tank were assigned to the temple.[5]

1.3 The inscriptions cited above state that lands that could be cultivated were assigned to temples and the proprietory rights passed from the state to the temple.

3. Temple Inscriptions 2868. 6. 37. 4. Temple Inscriptions 713.
5. Temple Inscriptions.

1.4 There is another type of transfer such as the lands granted to the Tanjore temple. They were not fallow lands or lands lying waste for many years. They were lands under cultivation. The lands were assigned in two ways. (1) as 'Kudineeki'—evicting the cultivator (2) as 'Kudineenga' — without evicting the cultivator. The tenants were evicted and absolute rights were made over to the temple, or the tenants were retained but proprietary rights passed to the temple.

2.1 What happened to the landowners who had proprietory rights over the lands thus taken over ?

A few of them were assigned lands of inferior quality elsewhere. Hence their annual income was reduced. A few of them migrated to other villages unable to produce enough grain to maintain their families, in search of fertile land. Mention is made in certain inscriptions about farmers leaving the village without cultivating lands assigned to them in exchange for lands taken over to be granted to the temple These lands were sold in auction[6] and bought by the temple authorities.

2.2 Thus it is clear the lands gifted to the temples were either communal lands of the villagers or lands of the freeholding type. In such transfer the freeholders, lost their fertile land in exchange for land of low fertility. The tenants lost their tenancy rights and became day labourers. Most of the freeholders became

6. **Raja Raja etc., Peruvilai. Lowest bid in auction.**

day labourers, being unable to make both ends meet from the produce of the land he got in exchange. All this was sought to be justified that those whose lands were acquired for the temple attained religious merit in this life and heaven in the next. That was the consolation offered in them.

2.3 But feudal landlords of the Vellan Vagai survived. They acquired extensive lands under the system of Karatchi (Tenancy right) where the Meeyatchi or karanmai (Proprietory right) remained with the temple. They also bought lands abandoned by the small peasants sold in auction. Their influence and power grew.

2.4 Another type of grant of land was 'Brahmadeya'—gift to Bramins. Whole villages were converted into Brahmadeya, a group of Brahmins given a fixed share in all the lands of the village. Such villages were called Brahmedesam or Chathur Vedi Mangalam. Raja Raja ordered all 'Vellanvagai' lands to be sold to Brahmins owning Devadana lands and assigned to those whose lands were thus taken over, in other villages. A number of Brahmedeyas were created during the chola rule.

3.1 Service grants were also made to choirs of dancing girls (Pathiyilar, Devaradiar, Natakakanikai) whose number was 400 in Tanjore and 30 to 200 in the various temples of Chola country. Grants were made to feed 'Brahmins', these grants being known as 'Sala bogam'. Families of soldiers who gave up their lives in the service of the King were assigned land known as

'Veerabogam' or 'Paktha bogam' or 'Uthirakkani'. Scholars who expounded religious scriptures were granted land knows as 'Bhattavirithi'. Besides these the officers and servants of the crown, the soldiers serving in the army were all remunerated by the produce of land assigned to them for their life time (Jeevitham).[7]

3.2 Thus land ownership in some form or other either in perpetuity or for life time of individuals vested in four classes of people.

(1) Temples: Devadana form of ownership. These affairs of the temple were managed by Brahmins who constituted themselves into Mahasabha. Most of these Brahmins possessed proprietary rights over Brahmadeya lands.

(2) Brahmadeyam: The proprietary rights were vested in individual Brahmins.

(3) Vellanyagai: The proprietary rights were vested in free landholders of non-Brahmin high castes.

(4) Jeevitham: Temple servants, dancing girls, musicians, religious instructors, barbers and washermen have rights to the produce of land assigned to them for their life time.

3.5 The dominant feudal class owning large extent of land and having control over the temple lands were

7. **Sadasiva Pandarathar—History of the Cholas Part III —Page 76.**

Brahmins. These lands were tax free. Their partners in the feudal set up were the big landlords of 'Vellanvagai'. The other parasitical classes stood between the feudal class and the actual tilier of the soil, the peasant and the agricultural labourer.

4.1 The classes that tilled the soil and produced the grain that was mainly appropriated by the feudal and parasitical classes were (1) the agricultural labourer (2) the tenants (Karatchi Udaiyar) (3) the sub-tenants ('Kudimai Udayar') (4) the serfs and slaves of temples. The radical changes effected by royal orders and the decisions of the Mahasabhas affecting structure of land proprietorship produced more and more tenants and sub-tenants. The tenants were of two types, (1) landowners of Vellanvagai who took over tenancy of temple lands and Devadana lands and (2) poor peasants who lived on their own lahour. The Brahmins were enjoined not to engage in work connected with agriculture. The Vellan vagai landowners lea·ed their lands to sub-tenants who were small peasants owning the implements of labour. They were the Kudimai Udaiyar. The landless labourers had no right to share in the produce but only received daily wages. The inscripti ns also speak of slaves who either sold themselves to the temples as slave and also those who were sold by their previous master to the temples.[8] They were only maintained by temple funds. All these classes of people produced the wealth of the

8. South Indian Inscriptions No. 279 of 1929.
S.I I. 230 of 1921.

country. These structural changes in landownership reduced the small peasant, real tenants and sub-tenants and slaves to conditions of abject poverty. They were made to bear the main burden of the extravagant expenses of the temples, the royal household and frequent wars. Their conditions deteriorated. The promise of religious merit and the prospect of bliss in the next world did not allure them very much. The tax burdens also fell squarely on their shoulders since the major portion of land in each village belonged to the temple or Brahmins which were tax-free. ('Iraiyili'.)

5.0 The unbearable conditions of life made the peasant struggle against them now and then. These struggles took the following forms.

5.1 The introduction to 'Temple Inscriptions' mentions the following incident. A dancing girl by name 'Chathuri Manickam' threw herself down from the temple tower to establish the right of her relatives to till the land assigned to her as jeevitham. An ther incident at the close of Chola rule is mentioned by an other inscription. A Brahmin committed self immolation in a similar manner to establish the rights of the temples for their maintenance when it was not paid to them by the Sabha.[9]—Self immolation appears to have been a form of protest against unjust measures and method of focussing attention on the sad state of affairs in any village.

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9. Temple Inscriptions 783 of 2365.

5.2 An inscription from Punjai in Tanjore district mentions that the temple guards (Trisula Velaikarars) committed self immolation by leaping into the flames of a fire lit before the temple to establish their rights over the land assigned to them which were grabbed by the temple authorities.

5.3 An inscription found at Aduthurai reports the following: The Brahmins with the help of the officers of the crown and the Vanniars wrought untold injustice on the people of 96 castes of the Idangai group (castes who are engaged in agriculture contributing their labour). It also enumerates the taxes the local village Sabha proposed to lay on them with the consent of the representative of the King, Mooventha velan. A mass meeting of 96 castes decided not to pay any tax levied by the Sabha and the King's officers. This reminds us of the no tax campaign of recent memory. Such decisions of the Idangai castes are brought to light by many more inscriptions.

5.4 Two inscriptions dated 1239 state that the cultivating peasants of a village presented a memorandum to the Sabha telling them that they would not cultivate the land unless steps were taken to prevent people illegally demanding shares in produce and many persons claiming to be tax collectors harassing them. This appears to be an ultimatum to the feudal classes or rather a strike notice to press their demands.

5.5 There were occasions when the angry peasant masses rose in revolt and pulled down the walls of temples where the documents of transfer of lands, that

robbed them of their rights were inscribed and also destroyed the original documents kept in the archives of temples. Two such incidents are recorded in the 19 year or Raja Raja III and the 1st year of Kulothunga I. The first inscription states that a riot took place in the 5th year of the King's reign during which the original records were destroyed. Hence the rights of individuals had to be decided according to actual possession of lands. The second[10] records that a riot between the Idangai and Valangai took place in 11th regnal year of Kulothungan when the walls of the temple were pulled down and the temple treasure was looted and the idols removed. Hence the temple was to be renovated and its property restored, and reconsecrated.[11]

5.6 Such records are rare because the kings refrained from inscribing such indictments against the feudal system over which they presided on stone and copper. Even the records that have come down to us are half hearted admissions.

6.1 These struggles of the peasantry were spontaneous protests and limited actions for specific demands. A few ameliorative measures were taken as we come to know from inscription such as remission of taxes, restoration of land forfeited,[12] recognition of the rights for which a section of the peasants struggled and made sacrifices. They were defensive actions of the peasantry

10. No. 111 Temple Inscription D 2863.
11. No. 786 Temple Inscription D 2387.
12. No. 94 Temple Inscription D 2875.

against the attacks of the feudal classes and the crown. These struggles did not bring about any radical change in the feudal structure, because these struggles were not intended to bring about a downfall of the feudal system.

Social Themes In Tamil folk ballads

0.0 Folk ballads in Tamil are an important genre of Folk literature which has not received the attention of modern scholars. There is a large body of folk ballads in Tamil with which our peasants are familiar. These can be classified into four types.

1. Epic fragments or mythical ballads.
2. Historical ballads.
3. Romantic ballads.
4. Ballads with Social themes.

0.1 Alli Arasani Malai, and Pavalakkodi are examples for ballads based on epic fragments from Mahabaratha.

Historical ballads are rarely met with. Examples for this type of ballads are Ivor Rajakkal Kathai, Kattabomman Kathaipadal, Maruthu Pandiar Kathai, Khan Sahib Chandai (War) and Desingu Rajan Kathai. A study of these ballads has been attempted in a paper submitted by me to the first I.C.T.S. 1965.

0.2 Romantic ballads are stories of love, heroism, victory in competition etc. Mathanakamarajan Kathai, Amaiar Ammanai Ayiram Thalaivangi Apoorva Chinthamani etc., are examples of this type.

0.3 The social ballads have social problems as their theme. Caste oppression. Intercaste marriage and its consequences, the misery woman endures in patri-

lineal joint family system, the effects of the partilineal inheritance on women, how frustration of the exploited peasant turns to robbery and dacoity, just to revenge himself on society, unemployment and its effect on society, such are the themes of social ballads.

1.1 I shall first enumerate a few ballads, popular in the countryside of Tamilnad. (1) Nallathangal, (Good sister) (2) Muthupattan kathai, (3) Chinnathambi kathai, (4) Chinnanadan kathai, (5) Vengalarajan kathai, (6) Thothukari Amman kathai, (7) Madurai Veeran kathai, (8) Kouthalamadan kathai. The texts of the ballads numbered 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 are available as cheap editions without introduction or notes, (4), (5), (8) are not available in print, but are available in manuscript form.

1.2 The stories of Nallathangal and Madura Veeran are sung in Ammanai form in eastern region of Ramnad and Madurai districts. All the other ballads are sung as Villupattu in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. Vengala Rajan kathai and Kouthalamadan kathai have almost been forgotten and only professional folk singers know the names of these two stories.

2.1 The ballads enumerated above fall into five types according to the social themes they deal with :

(1) Intercaste marriage and its tragic consequence– Muthupattan kathai, Maduraiveeran kathai and Chinnanadan kathai.

(2) Caste oppression and injustice to the folks belonging to the lowest caste, perpetrated by the people of the high castes—Chinnathambi kathai.

(3) The clashes between the matrilineal and patrilineal groups when the former seek marriage alliance with the latter : Thottukari Amman kathai and Vengala Rajan kathai.

(4) Denial of property rights to women and its tragic consequences, Nallathangal kathai.

(5) Humanism that transcends religious and caste barriers : Kouthalamadan kathai.

2.2 Let us now examine the themes of the first group of ballads dealing with love and marriage between a man and a woman belonging two different castes. The most well known of the stories of this type is the story of Muthupattan. He was a Brahmin youth who quarrelled with his father and left south to seek employment at Kottarakara, under a Malayalee ruler. His talents won him the favours of the ruler and in a few years he became prosperous. Having heard of this, his brothers visited him at Kottarakara and persuaded him to go with them to their native village, get married and settle there. They asked him to pack up his belongings and follow them. Muthupattan agreed to their request and started on his journey. On the way he met two Chakkli maidens and fell in love with them. The brothers tried as well as they could to persuade him to

follow them home. He refused, telling them that he would stay in the forest and get married to the Chakkli girls.

They attempted to murder him but he escaped alive. He sought the father of the girls fell at his feet and asked him to get his daughters married to him. Shocked beyond his wits, the Chakkli chief made evasive replies. He tried to dissuade Pattan from his resolve. Unable to ward him off, he enjoins upon him to observe certain conditions which he thinks would put sense into the crazy Brahmin and make him give up his resolve. All that was of no use. Pattan promised to fulfil those conditions, a few of them being (1) to renounce the marks of his caste (2) to tend herds of cows entrusted to the ehief's care, (3) to remove raw hide from carcasses and sell them. (4) to make shoes out of leather. (5) to eat and drink what the Chakklis were accostomed to. The Brahmin youth successfully completed his probation of apprenticeship and married the two daughters of the Chakkli chief. His father-in-law died a few years after. Pattan was elected chief. Under his chieftainship the Chakkli clan flourished. He was entrusted with the charge of protecting the highways between Tamilnad and Travancore. Bands of robbers who infested them were thwarted in their efforts to waylay caravans of Tamil merchants. Exasperated, they plotted to murder Muthupattan They drove away the cows entrusted to him by the villagers on the foot of the mountains and thus provoked a clash. Muthupattan was killed in his attempt to foil their attempt. His two wives burned themselves

on his funeral pyre. The people of the region built a temple and installed the images of Muthupattan and his wives and paid homage to them.

2.3 Madurai Veeran kathai is also a story of love and marriage between a Chakkli hero Madurai Veeran and the daughter of Naik nobleman, Bommi. This marriage enrages the Naik nobleman who rallies his castemen to fight against the 'upstart' Chakkli of the lowest caste. Bommi's father is killed in battle and the lovers escape to Trichy. Madurai Veeran finds employment in the army of the Naik ruler of Trichy. On the request of the famous Thirumalai Naick of Madurai, th Naik of Trichy sent Madurai Veeran on a raid to annihilate the robber gangs of Alagarmalai that pester the Pandyan kingdom. Madurai Veeran successfully destroyed the gang of robbers and was richly rewarded by Thirumalai Naick. But he soon got into trouble with the ruler since he was caught in an attempt to entice and abduct away Vellaiammal the favourite sweetheart of the Naik. The Naik unmindful of the services of Madurai Veeran ordered him to be quartered. Bommi and Vellaiammal who had fallen in love with him burn themselves on the funeral pyre of Madurai Veeran. There is a small niche dedicated to Madurai Veeran at the Western entrance near the base of the West Tower of the Meenakshi temple, Madurai.

2.4 The story of Chinnanadan is a conflict between right of inheritance and intercaste love. Chinnanadan or Kumaraswamy was the sole heir to the properties of

his father and four uncles. He had an only aunt whose only daughter was married to him when she was two years old and he was eighteen. When he was twenty years of age he fell in love with Ayyamkutti, a woman of the barber caste and lived in the outskirts of the town. His father took no objection to it since concubinage was not a forbidden pleasure to the youths of wealthy families. But trouble started after his wife attained puberty. Her parents wanted to send her to her husband's house. The father and uncles of Chinna Nadan asked him to sever his relations with Ayyamkutti, return to his parental home and live with his legal wife. Chinnanadan refused to recognise her as his wife and said he would for ever live with Ayyamkutti and her children. They said that they would disinherit him. He would not be intimidated. Then they reported the matter to their overlord, Zamindar of Nattathi and asked his advice. He told them that they might do whatever they liked. He promised his support to them. They went back to Chinna Nadan's house and murdered him in cold blood to save their caste and their families from ignominy. The two women committed suttee. There is a temple dedicated to these three at five places around Eral, a small town in Tiruchendur Taluk, Tirunelveli.

3.1 I have narrated the stories of the ballads of the first type somewhat at length, just to give a glimpse into the nature of the themes, these ballads deal with. In the first story the man renounces his social superiority economic advantages, family connections and high caste and identified himself with the clan life of the girls he

married. He does not waver. He is killed while fulfilling his duty to the caste that had adopted him. But the heroes and heroines of ballad meet with tragic end. Their love is successful but their life is not. We shall see why that is so at the end of this paper.

3.2 In the second story the woman belongs to a higher caste than that of the man. The father could not tolerate the conduct of his daughter and sets himself the task of capturing alive both his daughter and her husband and putting them to death. But the valour, the military rowess and the fearlessness of the hero attracts the notice of the Trichy ruler who belonged to the same caste as the agrieved father of Bommi. But he does not hesitate to take Madurai Veeran into his service so long as he could be useful to him in subduing his enemies. Another ruler of the same caste invites the hero to put down the dacoits in his domains without caring for the injustice the hero had done to a Naik nobleman. But he punishes the hero only when he is personally agrieved. This story clearly throws light upon how the rulers looked upon intercaste marriage and how they were tolerant so long as it did not clash with their own interests.

3.3 The last story is rather unique in all folk lIterature in Tamil. I have come across. The landlords tolerated concubinage and illicit love, so long as it did not run counter to the rights of the legal wife and rights of partilineal inheritance. When it did come to a clash with them, they would destroy such relationships.

4.1 I have established the chronology of the ballad of Muthupattan in a series of articles in Saraswathi a literary journal in 1960. These incidents can be said to have occurred on the basis internal and external evidence about 320 to 350 years ago. The csate restrictions on marriage and inheritance were very rigorous and any breach of it would end in serious consequences. And it did end in a tragedy for all those concerned. But the persons involved in these incidents soon became heroes and heroines of a ballad which by its humanist appeal attracted the peasant masses who now hold the heroes and heroines in great veneration and even worship them. The caste fanatics tend to whittle down the sublime power of the story by introducing certain changes. The main change was that the women were born not to Chakkli but to a Brahmin woman who deserted them and were brought up by Valappagadai a chakkli. I have shown in my article referred to above that this is not true from the evidence of a folk singer whose father, grand father and great grand father had sung this ballad in the Muthupattan temple, that it was he who thirty years ago changed the story to suit the *taste* of Brahmins and Vellalas of the Tirunelveli District. This would show how much caste fanatics afraid are about the wholesome influence the ballad might exert on the people of the lower castes.

4.2 Chronologically the second ballad closely follows the period of the first. Thirumalai Naick mentioned in the ballad lived just 300 years ago. All the comments I have made on the first ballad applies to this also.

The third ballad is the latest of this batch. It is a powerful attack on caste fanaticism and cruelty, of close caste segmentation and also plea for broad humanism.

4.3 Chinnathambi kathai has a different theme. It describes how craftily the ruler of a small region makes use of the physical strength, courage and organisational skill of a chakkli youth to clear the forest slopes of wild animals to make it fit for cultivation and when his fame spreads and influence grows, he sends him to his brother-in-law who needs an unmarried youth to be sacrified before digging out a treasure pot. The boy is killed. The fear that this boy with his adherents might prove a threat to his power induces the ruler to get rid of him when an opportunity arose. Such themes recur quite often in ballads. To mention only the more well known of them. (1) Ananchi kathai (2) Thadiveerayan kathai. These stories reveal how caste segmentation was maintained and the youth who showed talent and promise were nipped in the bud by the vilest means by the feudal lords.

5.1 The last type of social ballads I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, deal with the bloody clashes between Nadars and Nayars of South Travancore. The former are patrilineal and the later matrilineal. When a Nayar king wants to marry a Nadar woman, the father of the girl refuses to give his consent thinking that the marriage would only amount to concubinage and his grandsons would never inherit the kingdom. The king decides to take his bride by force. He surrounds the fort of the Nadar chief Vengalarajan But the girl persuades

her father to cut off her head and throw it out from the ramparts. So it was done. The Nayar king took away the head and cremated it and raised a temple over it. The two stories are similar. Such incidents might have occurred when the Nayars spread south and met the Nadars already settled there. The chronology of the events of the stories have yet to be decided.

6.1 'Nallathangal' is the story of the tragic end of a woman who throws her s ven children into a well and commits suicide, being unable to bear the indignities heaped upon her by her cruel sister-in-law. Nallannan and his sister Nallthangal worked together while they were young and unmarried. They raised crops and planted trees. The family lived in prosperous circumstances. Then Nallathangal was, given in marriage to a wealthy farmer living in a far off village. She bore seven children. Then there was draught for many years and her family began to be in want. The Nall thangal's husband left the family in search of work. Nallathangal went to her parental home just to spend a few days and obtain from her brother a few bags of corn to tide over critical days. When she arrived in her brother's home, she found that her brother had gone to the fields. Her sister-in-law treated her as an unwanted guest. Disappointed in her expectations and broken hearted at the cruel taunts of her sister-in-law she left after a few hours. She then realised that though she had contributed her labour for many years to increase the wealth of her parental home, she had no right to even a moiety of that property because after marriage she had become an utter stranger to her own paternal family. The strange

woman who had become the wife of her brother had all rights since her children would be heirs to that property. She throws her children into a well and threw herself down into it after them. The brother returned home and learned about her visit from the neighbour. Going in search of her he found her and the children dead. Having learned of his wife's behaviour he took revenge on her and her parents by means of a strategem and finally kills himself.

There are many pieces of evidence to establish the historicity of the characters. Khansapuram near Watrap in Ramnad District is located as the home of Nallannan. A mile away from this village there is a well and one big stone and seven small stones representing the heroine and her children. The incidents of the story are believed to have taken place 150 years ago.

6.2 'Kouthalamadan kathai' is a story of sublime humanism that transcends barriers of caste and religious differences A chakkli girl Poovayi goes every day to a town to sell curds and ghee to her customers. A rogue belonging to a higher caste waylaid her every day with evil intention. She escaped every time since it chanced everytime people passed that way. He sneaked away. She informs a Muslim youth (Pattanni Annan– Muslim Brother) about her trouble and her fear that on that day he might be in wait for her. It was later than usual and getting dark. The 'Muslim brother' promised to accompany her. The rogue approached them and attempted to molest her. The Muslim brother warned him but to no avail. The rowdy attacked him with a knife. The Muslim brother defended himself. Both

were killed in the fight. Poovayi was distressed to see that the man who had offered to save her from insult was killed. She cursed the gods and killed herself.

6.3 Except the story of 'Nllathangal' which is known to the people of Tamilnad as a whole, the other stories are known only to the people living around the place where the incidents of the stories took place. The Muthupattan kathai has spread throughout Tirunelveli District and a part of Kanyakumari District. Madurai Veeran kathai spread throughout Madurai District. Chinnathambi kathai is known only in the southern part of Tirunelveli district. The 'Thottukkari Amman kathai' and Vengalarajan kathai are not known outside south Kanyakumari district. Kouthalamadan kathai has been forgotten even in the place of its origin.

The Tamil ballads have not become the cultural inheritance of the people of Tamilnad. There is an apprehension in my mind that they may soon vanish from the memory of the Tamil people in the course of two or three decades. It is therefore the primary duty of scholars engaged in the study of Tamil folk lore to collect these and similar ballads and bring out well printed and annotated editions in several volumes to save these cultural treasures created by the common people, disappearing fast by the theft of that imperceptible thief-Time.

7.0 The following conclusions may be arrived at from the foregoing study of the ballads.

7.1 The ballads throw light upon the nature of social structure such as caste organisation, rigidity of caste rules, and the relation of caste to class. Thus the upper feudal classes correspond to the privileged higher social castes and the caste rules are generally favourable to them.

7.2 The laws of inheritance are held sacred and the caste rules are designed to safeguard the laws of inheritance. Thus ties of kinship are to be broken if they run counter to the feudal rules of inheritance. Thus concubinage is tolerated so long as it does not interfere with the interests of legitimate children born of the wife of the same caste. Any human relationship that would challenge this line of inheritance would be ruthlessly destroyed.

7.3 The rigidity of the caste rules are no more than chains on lower strata of the working people of the feudal society to keep them confined to their stations in life. Talent, initiative, courage and other noble traits discovered in the youth are encouraged only to the extent they do not threaten the supremacy of the higher castes in the heirachy of the caste organisation. All the rules of caste are intended to preserve the feudal relations between classes and perpetuate the social system advantageous to the feudal landlords of the higher castes.

7.4 The breach of the caste rules especially of sex and marriage are frowned upon by the leaders of the higher castes for many reasons. The chief of them are: (1) Amalagamation of caste would break down caste barriers and strike at the root of class differentiation and introduce changes in social structure. Hence the

opposition to intermingling of castes by marriage is really an inhibitory factor on social change. That is why in the case of the slightest infringement of caste marriage rules, the offenders are liquidated without the slightest compunction.

7.5 The feudal system with its special form of inheritance deprives women of any share in property. The position of women in society is therefore subordinate. They cease to have any right in the home of her birth as soon she gets married.

7.6 Humanist passions are hedged in by caste segmentation. Noble passions of man sometimes rise above these limitations transcending considerations of religion and caste. But that is only just a ripple in the otherwise calm surface of society. The caste rules and organisation are so tenacious that any individual protest soon loses its effect and everything calms down to normal. But the aspirations of the lowest strata of the people are reflected in such lone protests and inspires progeny for centuries. Such are the stories of Muthuppattan and Madurai Veeran.

7.7 The clash between any two cultures of different groups of people find expression in certain ballads of the regions in which these clashes occured. Mainly these clashes occurred when marriage alliance is sought by one group with another group with different forms of inheritance.

7.8 These ballads provide source material for sociologists, social anthropologists, and historians of society, for their research work.

Women in Tamil Folk lore

Sources.

1.1 The bulk of Tamil folk songs especially the bullaby, the dirge and love songs are the creations of women. Hence the picture of women in Tamil folk songs is largely autobiographical.

1.2 The ballads are different genre of folk lore dealing with the themes of (a) love, (b) heroism (c) social problems of caste oppression and (d) historical incidents. Women do not figure prominently in types of ballads (b) and (d) and play a minor rolles in (a) and (c).

1.3 The worship of goddess of fertility 'Pavai', and goddesses of courage Mutharamman, Muthumari, Mariamman and exclusive riturals of women suggest a prehistoric matriarchal state of society in which women had predominance.

1.4 Proverbs also throw light on the rights, duties and character of women as folk lore concieves them.

The aim of this paper.

2.1 The aim of this paper is to describe the life of women in relation to their position in caste and class strata as can be gleaned from folk lore. I shall consider

women of the different class strata in their roles in the family and in the manifestation of their relations to other members of society divided into classes and castes. Hence what I propose to present in this paper is not a generalised ghostlike portrait of women but the woman in flesh and blood in all her, varying vissicitudes of life acting in the historically conditioned social formation of recent historical times and the living present. I shall rely in this study on folk songs, folk ballads and folk proverbs mainly and also on materials like description of rituals and worship of goddesses available to me.

Social position of women.

2.1 It is difficult to sketch a harmonious synthetic picture of the character and behaviour patterns of the women of Tamilnad as they vary with her social position and caste. Her attitude to her child, husband, in-laws, neighbours, work and socieiy varies with her social relations depending on her role in the production process at a given historical epoch. Her consciousness is conditioned by and arises out of her way of material life.

2.2 For about two thousand years the social formation in Tamilnad has been feudal. The main classes standing opposed to each other with contradictory interests have been the feudal land lord, the Brahmin executives of the land owning temples, the religious heads of feudal mathas and other non-productive exploiting sections. The poor peasant and the agricultural labourer produced the food that all sections of the society consumed. The auxilary exploiting class was the

individual merchant and the merchant guilds who bought and sold the products of labour of the handicraftsmen, weavers and artisans. The history of class society goes back to 2000 to 2500 years. Clashes and open struggles had occurred between the exploiters and the exploited many a time. The stratification of society underwent certain changes but thanks to the self sufficient village community organisation and the rigidity of the caste system the society remained in a stage of stagnation till the 18th century A. D.

Social position of women of wealthy classes.

3.1 The woman belonging to the land owning or merchant families has no independent economic role. The man is the economic prop of the family. Hence she is but the shadow of the men folk. The woman's position in such families is summed up by a proverb:

"The woman is the shadow of her father when she is a maid, share of her husband in married life and the servant of her sons after her husband's death".

3.2. She has no right to freedom of action throughout her life. The position of women belonging to the artisan craftsmen families is not quite different. The women of the artisan class do not ply the trade of their men folk. They are only housewives like their counterparts in the landowning and merchant families. So the proverb applies to their conditions of life equally well.

Social position of women agricultural labourers.

3.3 Agricultural labourers are of both sexes. Though wages are lower for women than that for men for the same quality and quantity of work, certain types of labour such as transplantation and weeding are entirely the monopoly of women. They play a role in the economic support to their families. So also women belonging to the weaver-castes. Though these castes are patrilocal, the women enjoy comparative freedom and can fight injustice with comparative ease.

3.4 Such is the social background of women in Tamilnad. We have to interpret folk songs and other folk materials and the thoughts, beliefs and feelings expressed in them in the light of the general social background of the creators of folk lore.

Plan of the Study.

3.5 I shall consider in the following sections woman in her different roles, keeping in mind the differentiation in social class position. I shall mainly try to describe women's role as (a) love-partner, (b) wife (c) member of a joint family (d) mother (e) as a worker (f) as a member of society (g) as a widow.

Women as a love partner.

4.0 Love is the predominent theme in folk songs and ballads. Premarital love is uncommon among the upper castes and classes The peasant and labourer - maidens go out to work in fields, plantations, building sites and

fetch firewood from forests. They have ample opportunites to mix with young men who work with them. Love sprouts either to be consummated in marriage or to wither away. Whether love is successful or not, it raises the spirit to higher levels of joy which finds expression in songs. Love pines away when unfavourable rules of caste and class intervene. Then songs expressing dejection sorrow and despair flow out of the broken heart. Once in a while the lovers decide to surmount obstacles of caste and elope. But it is a rare occurrence. Though rare the love - muse is full of praise for such heroic lovers. During the period of wooing and courtship, it is the maid who behaves with restraint and responsibility, never allowing her lover to cross the limits. She always desires to make courtship a prelude to the permanent union in marriage. Here are a few examples to illustrate the self restraint of the maid when her lover desires physical union with her.

Modesty and restraint in love.

4.1 Here is a conversation between a lover and his girl friend.

Lover - Maid, who walks along the fringe of the mountain with a mud pot,

Place the mud pot on the ground and name the price for your two woman pots.

Girl - If the mud pot gets broken another pot can be bought. If the woman pot is broken, will the world bear with it, my king?

4.2.2 A lover attempts to pick up conversation with his girl friend. She has been asking him to go to her father and request her hand in marriage. As he had not paid heed to her request, she wants to persuade him in a light and pleasant manner to direct his efforts in that direction.

Lover - Maid, you draw water with a long rope-beating rythm with your hands.

Will it be unpleasant to you to quench my thirst ?

Maid - I shall give you water. I shall quench your thirst if you come to the raised platform before my house I shall give you cool water.

LOVER - I don't know where the platform is. I do not know the shady road which may lead to it. If you give me hint I shall come there.

Maid - The platform will be adorned with palm-leaves cut in the shape of fish.

It will be surrounded by ornamental painting.

The roof of the platform will be thatched with palm leaves shaped like fish. It is the holy platform of marriage.

4.2.3 The period of courtship drags on and on. The maid attempts to persuade her lover to make the love bonds more enduring and happy by marrying her.

My Indra, my God,

When will you pass this way ?

Will he pass this way ?

Will he give me betel leaves ?

Shall I munch them to make my mouth red ?

Shall my body emanate a fragrant smell of the flowers ?

I ascended up a fort wall

I plucked a ripe mango fruit

But I did not taste it.

I am like a flower in a casket.

Like a jaded flower I am shut up in my house.

When will you come bringing dry raw rice and ripe plantain fruit and unbroken coconut fruit.

To become my inseparable companion ?

As a love partner, the young woman is portrayed as a peer to man in depth of emotions. But she desires to transmute premarital amorous passions into legal married happiness with all its responsibilities.

Courage of eloping lovers.

4.3 This picture of woman as a love partner will not be complete without mentioning the constancy of lovers who elope to find a home in a far off village.

4.3.1 The lovers belong to different castes. Their match is opposed by their parents and relatives. The lovers elope, relying on their love for each other and their ability to work for their maintenance. They settle down in a village far away from their native village and go to work together. After a day of hard work they sit down under a tree to rest. The wife regrets nothing and sings in joy. The man reciprocates her feelings.

Wife - You are handsome
As a lotus flower.
Your eyes are black as the cloud.
I was charmed with your good looks.

Husband – You cooked your food on the palm of your hand before you joined me.
Who granted you the boon to cook in a metal pot ?

Wife - I paid wages measuring out pearls.
I followed you for your good character.
It is for your sweet nature that I left home to follow you.

Husband - "I have a bundle of rice packed in a cloth.
It is mixed with milk.
Let us eat it together,
Come near, my peahen"

Failure of love affairs

4.4 Intercaste marriages being rare, premarital love affairs between couples each hailing from different castes very often prove unsuccessful. Then the disap-

pointed young woman or young lover expresses her or his despair and melancholy in songs laden with tears.

Woman - We were united in love
Like hairs in a pretty knot,
Like a crane picking up a fish from water
Our bonds are broken.
I no more wear washed clothes.
I no more munch betel leaves.
After my lover left me
I forgot to drink gruel.
I cleaned a glass cup.
I planted a boquet of roses in it.
It lies withered in th: cup.
Two doves pecked corn in a maize field.
When one of them was removed
The other pined away in secret.

Marriage.

5.1 Marriage is not always an aftermath of courtship. In most cases it is arranged marriag-. In the higher castes property and wealth are the deciding factors of marriage relationship. Among the working folk, skill in work, strength to work, willingness and training for domestic drudgery are all counted as favourable factors for a young women in the competitive marriage market.

The dowry system in marriage.

5.2 Let me illustrate how property and wealth decides marriage matches in the higher castes of society. Here is a list of objects of dowry expected of a rich family.

What objects of dowry
were given to our bride ?

A whole shed of milch cows -
A tank full of buffaloes -
A pen full of sheep -
A golden foot stool on which to sit
while churning curd -

A recliming board carved in gold
The rope for churning curd
that too of gold -

Dolls for children yet to be born
that too made of gold -

These were the objects of dowry
that our sister took away.

5.3 The working folks also imitate the higher ups and bring sorrow and suffering to themselves and to the young daughters-in law. A bride's father promised to present a gold ring to his son at the time of the wedding. He was too poor to carry out his promise. The bride went to live in the family of her father-in-law. They taunted her with her father's broken promise. She prostrated before her father in law and begs get him to forgive her and treat her as a daughter forgetting the sin of her father.

Father in - law - Your father paid three hundred as dowry.

He boasted that he was a rich landlord
and promised that he would present
a gold ring.

My son weeps for the last three days asking for the ring.

Daughter in law -

Don't taunt me with what was paid as dowry.
You need not invite my parents for the bridal feast.

I am the daughter of poor parents.

Accept me as I am a poor girl-my father-in-law.

The Bridegroom -

Your inside is crooked,
Your back is crooked
You unlucky hunch back
Is it for all this I married you-my peahen?

Bride Price.

5.4 The bride price is also a prevalent custom among the peasants. But the bride price is of no use to the bride if she is not skilled in domestic duties. A young husband teases his wife for not being able to cook well.

Husband - Your father received three hundred and one
And tried it up at the corner of his dhoti.
Shall I embrace your neck and cry
When I find you cannot prepare 'ganji' for me to drink ?

Divorce.

6.1 A husband treats his wife cruelly for not being skilled in culinary arts. She puts up with his cruelty till a saturation point is reached. Finally she flares up:

Crushing forest chillies,
I prepared curry for him. Complaining that the curry is hot,

he beats me closing the door
I prepared mushroom curry,
I prepared ragi balls
Complaining that it has become cold he beats me with a stick.

He knew that I had schooling when he married me.

He beats me breaking my waist saying that I do not know how to prepare 'ganji'
He was charmed with my looks
He said that on pinching my body, it became red at that spot.

He now beats me saying that I do not know how to cook rice.

I got married in a strange unknown village.
Don't beat me ; Don't pinch me.
I shall quit tomoorw before dawn.

Domestic quarrels and reconciliation

6.2 In such cases there may be reconciliation between husband and wife if the wife learns culinary work and becomes an adept in it. A folk song tells --

how after a cruel treatment meted out to her by her husband for not being able to prepare tasty dishes for him. She learns the art of cooking from her neighbours and becomes an expert in the art. The husband praises her and begins to shower his love on her. As the first part of the story is given in the song quoted above, I shall now quote only the second part describing how the young wife learned the art of cooking.

Unable to bear the beatings,
She told her father.
Her father brought plenty of vegetables.
She did not know how to slice them.
She sent some one to the palace
for a slicing machine.
Her uncle brought a slicing machine and
sliced vegetables to help her.
He wept learning her tale of sorrow.
She began to cook. She fried and she cooked
Muthamma (the wife) cooked rice.
She fried appalam with ghee.
She wore a silk saree.
She laid a mat for Muthiah (her husband)
He sat and hummed a song inhaling the
odour of food.
She bent over his leaf and served rice and
other dishes.
The chaste sister of ours serves her husband.
He eats well pleased, devours not only food
but also devours her with his eyes.
Praise her all women -
Sing her praise all women.

Domestic quarrel and divorce.

6.3 But a few men are by nature cruel. Nothing pleases them. Perhaps they have an eye on another wealthy girl. Perhaps without any bride price he can marry her if he divorces the first wife. If he divorces her he must pay a fine. If she is forced to leave by his cruel treatment, she must repay the bride price. He adopts such heartless methods to get rid of her. Then she leaves him and also decides to tell all people how cruelly he treated her thus giving a warning to all girls whom he would approach with proposals of marriage.

Wife - The unhusked paddy is the stone husker,
The polished rice in the 'Muram'
You 'Mama', who spoke ill of cooked rice
Here is your sacred thali (Mangalya) take it.

Husband - I won't take the holy 'thali'
I won't take even if you give me substitute wife
Come to the village court
with thirty pieces of silver in a corner of your saree.

Wife - I won't come to the village court.
Even if you drag me there
I won't come.
You, who spoke ill of cooked rice
take this, your thali.

(Thali is the sacred thread to which is attached the gold mangalya which is tied round the bride's neck at the auspicious moment on the wedding day. It is removed only on husband's death.)

Here, the wife in desperation throws it to his face meaning thereby that he is as good as dead for her.,

Ecconomic reasons for marriage.

6.4 Considerations of wealth and money in marriages very often make for most unsuitable matches. In a few cases there may be disparity in age. A young bride may find herself married to an old widower. If her parents are poor, they would think that they are doing her something good by giving her away to a rich man even though he may be old. But she will resent their decision in later life. As Marx said an old man can give a young wife nothing but his disease and senility. She would then weep in secret and lead a life of sorrow.

"I shall not eat cooked maize balls
I shall not obey you
I shall not live with this grey haired old man.
I am like a guava fruit full of juice
Am I to live with this old man who is as
dry as a weed"

Joint family

7.1 In a joint family, the mother in law, sisters in law and wives of the brothers in law conspire to make the life of a young wife unhappy. The husband loves her. That is her only comfort. She wishes all those who are wanton and cruel to die. She draws up a list of them and recommends this list to God of death.

Our land is good - my destined husband is good
The monkey that gave birth to him - she is the source of all trouble.

The land is good - my destined husband is good
The mountain monkey that give birth to him- she is the source of all trouble.

On the river bank.
I left two goats which I had bought.
For the goats to grow well
My sisters in law should die
I left two hens on the tank bund,
For them to live and grow my mother in law must die.

I left two cows tied to a pole. For them to live and prosper, my father in law must die.

The young wife desires to put by something for a rainy day. Her efforts are frustrated by the in-laws. That is why she curses them and wishes for their death.

Woman as mother.

8.1 The role of woman as mother is highly respectable. As a mother she wins respect and regard from her husband, her in-laws and neighbours. The society being patrilineal the birth of a son, heir to the property is welcomed with joy.

The baby son is panegyrised in a thousand lullabies. His future glory is foretold. If it be a baby girl, the

lullaby muse turns dumb. In the case of baby girls arriving in working class families, she is loaded with advice in the lullabies. Even the boys are not foretold glorious future because the mnther knows that their lot in life is hard. We shall make a study in contrast of the thoughts, feelings, hopes and expectations of a mother of wealthy family and those of a mother of a poor peasant family in the lullabies they sing to their baby-sons. That will reveal how even maternal emotions and exuberance is conditioned by the material life of the two mothers.

The lullaby sung by a rich mother :

> " Are you the grandson of the wealthy lord whose lands are fertilised with mango fruit and watered with honey ?
>
> Are you the son of lucky lord who rides out in a silver chariot drawn by cloud like bullocks.
>
> Are you the son of the generous lord who distributes paddy in charity ?
>
> Are you the heir to the kingdom of Madurai measuring three kathas ?
>
> Are you the heir born to rule over fifty six kingdoms ?
>
> Ave you the grandson of the king of eighteen kingdoms.
>
> Born to expand it into fifty si x ?"

Now the lullaby of the poor mother :

My beauty with pearly smile and flowery teeth,

Why did you arrive in this empty cottage to play ?

Did you come to this poor hut to crawl on the damp floor ?

The floor is rough and uneven and will it not hurt you if you crawl on it ?

Why did you choose this cottage when there are marble mansions with coral pillars ?

While there are rich men who will bring you up in wealth

why did you choose to be born to this poor woman

who eats maize half the days of the year and goes hungry for the rest of the days ?

If I wish to feed you with cow's milk, the cow does not give milk because I could not buy cotton seed to feed it.

If I wish to feed you with goat's milk, there is no leaf on the plants for they have wilted and withered.

If I wish to feed you from my breast, I canno do it because I get nothing to eat and It have become as lean as lanky as a monkey.

I work in the fields and leave you on the field bunds.

Will you cry before I finish my work and come to the field bund ?

I work as a helper to a mason and he scolds me very otten.

If the mason scolds me will not your littles face wince in pain ?

8.2 The thoughts and feelings expressed in these two songs by two mothers express the difference between the two worlds of material conditions of existence that determine their desires and fancies. The love of the poor mother is circunscribed by her poverty. She only resents her inability to feed and bring up the child as she would like.

Barrenness - the worst curse.

9.1 Motherhood though not happy to the poor mother, is still wished for since barrenness is looked upon as a curse. A barren woman is under a curse thing she touche. The seeds she sows withers away, the cow she milks will become dry, the plant she tend. wilts away and the baby she kisses will die prematurelys The inlaws curse her, the husband blames her and the neighbours are cold towards her.

"In my street no woman is barren except me.
I drove a cow home but hearing my name it
went dry

I drove two buffaloes home but hearing my
name they too went dry.

A cow and two buffaloes went dry.
I dug a tank on the way home, to water the
cows and buffaloes.

But cows and buffaloes would not drink
water from the tank.

I dug a tank for the cows and sheep to drink.
But the sheep and cows would not drink
water from the tank.

For I am under the curse of barrenness.

Now another song from a ballad:

I am a barren woman laughed at by my
neighbours

Whatever I touch loses the capacity to
muliply.

The buffalo calf is barren because I fed it.
The black cow is barren because I tended it.
The drumstick tree that I watered does not
bear fruit.

The dog which is my pet is also barren.
I wither at the time when I should blosso-
forth.

I duy up when I should bring forth fruit.
Women of my age are mothers of seven children.

Such is the strong faith of our women that barrenness is the worst curse on women. It may lead to divorce or to the second marriage of her husband with a second wife.

Mother in dirge.

9.2 The mother is an embodiment of love. She is the source of succour to the daughters when they undergo suffering in her husband's home. She sends her daughter presents on all occasions of festivity, such as birth of a baby, marriage of a sister in law, local festivals etc. When she dies, the daughter falls into inconsolable grief. The loss is irrepairable. After her death, her sisters in law become mistresses of the home in which she was born. Her rights as the daughter of the family will not be recognised by them. She will have no right to the property of her father which will pass on to her brothers. Only her sisters in law and their children will enjoy the properties of her father.

Such thoughts are expressed in dirges (called oppari) sung on the occasion of the death of the mother.

" It rains in the east.
Vennaru swells with flood.
In the stream of Vannaru
the fish splash the water.
I lost the fish, I lost my mother.

It rains in the south
Chinnaru swells with flood.
In the stream of chinnaru little fish splash the water.
No one will call me child now
I lost the fish, I lost my mother.
(Vennaru and chinnaru are names of rivers)

9.3 After the death of the mother, the daughter forefeits all rights she enoyed as daughter of the family. The sisters in law assume power and deny the daughter any right which they may claim. A daughter expresses this feeling in a folk song.

When I travel by a golden car and arrive at my mother's house.
I find I cannot stay there under the shade of that roof.
I have no right in my mother's house.
When I travel in a golden car and arrive at my husband's house
I find I am looked upon as a stranger belonging to a lower caste"

Women and social events.

10.1 Women are not participants in the social events of the village. For instance caste riots (communal riots) take place in a village. Men of two different communities kill each other. Those who die are brothers or husbands of the women of the village. They lose their husbands or relations in such riots in which they do not participate. In one such riots a woman's lover was killed. She could not own him as her lover openly So she weeps and says:

The upper cloth brought at Ramnad, adorned the man who wore it
A lakh of people looked at him in admiration.
After the riot subsided I saw the upper cloth a present to him from me lying on the ground drenched in blood.

A womau laments the death of a child in the riots:

A regular battle field-
Death dance, Murder run riot,
Should a child die in this senseless killing spree.

Woman could only drink the cup of bitterness resulting from the enmity and bigotry of their menfolk.

10.2 Litigation ruins families in the countryside. Though the women could not prevent men from going to court on the slightest pretext, they dislike village feuds continuing for many years and ruining both the parties to the disputes. An old woman speaks about a civil suit that ruined the richest families in her village.

A bundle of papers,
Dates of hearing dragging on,
The unending suit
has now ended.
Huge house where lives famous
Naik family, the youngsters have brought about its ruin.

Woman's plight as a widow.

11.1 The condition of the widow of any caste is miserable. Her presence at a wedding or a happy occasion is considered inauspicious. She cannot be present when a child is born to her son or during the ceremonies of naming the child. She feels herself a stranger when feasts are held during a wedding or any other happy event in the family. She is forbidden to attend religious festivals. A widow describes her feelings of desolation and lonelines in a folk song :

> If I carry a plantain leaf and go to my son's house
> They refuse to feed me because it is a happy event.
> If I take a measure of rice and go to Palani mountain to worship,
> The priest tells me that prayer will do me no good.
> If I take two measures of rice to Chruli mountain to worship God
> The priest tells me, prayer will do me no good.

Survivals of matriarchy.

11.2 The goddesses of fertility and propitation point to a prehistoric age in which primitive agriculture was practised by women. It was a matriarchal society in which women dominated over men. The survivals

of matriarchal society are also found in certain agiicultural rituals in which women alone participate.

W oman as a plantation worker.

Due to pressure and crisis in agriculture the agricultural labourers left their villages in search of work. They migrated to Kandy in Ceylon and the western ghats to find work in tea plantations. They found life in plantations too miserable to endure. The scourage of malaria took a heavy toll. Many of them returned to their villages to take up their traditional occupations. The overseers of the plantations descended upon villages to recruit labourers to work in the plantations. Women were preferred to men for the wages paid to them was lower than that paid to men. A young woman is approached by a relative who is an oversear in a plantation. He attempts fo recruit her to the plantation where he works. He paints a rosy picture of the life in the plantation and asks her to follow him to get a job there. The maid had heard of the miserable conditions of life of the plantation wonkers and refuses to follow him.

This conversation is set forth in a folk song :

Overseer - I shall pay five rupees per head as advance.
We shall board the train leaving at five this evening ;
Listen to me my girl ; dont refuse.
If you work for the whole year you will earn handfuls of money.

If you deliver five pounds of tea at the drying yard,
You will be paid five annas per day.
You will be given six measures of rice for five days.

You will get an allowance of one rupee every week.
If you do not absent yourself on account of illness.
You will get a present of a saree every six months.
When they settle accounts every year you will get a woolen blanket free.
You will get a maternity allowance of five rupees when you deliver a child.
When you are in your periods you will get leave with pay.

The Girl - If you work in my farm, uncle I shall pay you wages.
Don't yawn for the fruit that you cannot pluck.
I don't want work for the whole year.
I don't want work for a week.
I don't wish to fall down and weep rolling on the drying yard.
Only when ganji is not available I must think of five pounds of tea.
I am not in want rice nor dhal.
I am not in want of rice.
Don't talk to me as if you would be a beggar.
I have fields and farms here;

Why should I go to a far off forest?
If you ascend the mountain top
you must again descend to the plains.
Go and talk about pay and leave to your sisters and take them with you to work there.
If I want to marry I can choose a handsome youth here.

Only those who were stricken with extreme poverty went to work in the plantations. The work was back breaking and exploitation cruel. Many songs describe. the sorrowful thoughts of the women workers languishing in the cold mountain slopes, foiling and moiling to enrich the foreign planter.

Here is the song of a woman worker:

(1) With flowers on my hair, the agent brought me here. . .
He kills me giving back breaking works

(2) I went to the Cardomam plantation
I worked there seven or eight days.
Then I felt home sick thinking of the green fields of my village.
Tears flowed down my cheeks and breasts
I have seen cardomam plantations;
I have seen cardomam mountains.
Cruel famine drove me away from my village to the plantations of Kombai and Pannaipuram.

Woman as Agricultural Labourer

12.2 Change in the type of work to which a woman is accustomed to from childhood is also caused by marr-iage. A woman who has obtained skill in agricultural operations in dry lands may have to work in wet lands after marriage to a man residing in a village in the river basin. Then she finds the change unpleasant before she gets used to it.

girl says in a folk song:–

I don't know how to transplant
I don't know how to weed
I feel amazed standing in the slushy mud.

She will certainly surmount the difficulties of newness with a little practice

13.1 Certain types of agricultural operations are the monopoly of women. Transplantation of paddy is one of them. Sometimes the women enjoy the conster-nation of the landlord when he finds that the women tra-nsplant paddy seedings too wide apart in his field. He requests them to transplant seedlings leaving the correct distance between each other.

He is now completely at their mercy.
"In the field of four corners, girls, transpla-nting seedings,
I am a poor man; please transplant seedlings at proper distance.

Conclusion

13.2 From the foregoing study we get a picture of women portrayed in Tamil folk lore in all the variety of roles a woman plays in life as love partner, wife, mother, member of a joint family, member of a historically conditioned social formation in a patrilinear society, agricultural and plantation labourer, and as widow. Social changes now ushered in by the struggles of the masses including women are bringng in changes in the social position of women.

ERRATA

Page	Line	as found	Correct
10		*After* British conquest carry the imprint of-	*add* modern folk songs
25	26	folk	fall
29	10	Who	Whom
32	20	Disappeared	disappears
33	7	Kundalakesi	Neelakesi
42	22	Married and Devanthi	married Devanthi
43	10	Appear	appears
43	14	Med	men
44	21	Evil of good	evil or good
55	1	to	do
59	19	Vithalaraby	Vithalaraya
64	4	was in concern	was his concern
69	14	pathan	Pathan
73	15	to be low	to lie low
75	15	Herision	derision
77	21	Officer	Office
78	16	they withdraw	they should withdraw
78	23	beares	bearers
79	9	supplies in the	supplies for the
83	20	sectining	seething

83	24	the where	the spot where
84	3	had distinguisehed in	were distinguished in
86	15	the for	the fort
87	3	cheyed	obeyed
87	16	woodwinkes	hookwinks
87	17	gather	gathers
88	4	entestined	entertained
91	19	British are	British were
93		Foot note - add under 3: Vettumperumal.	
120	26	might be	might by
124	2	bullaby	lullaby
126	18	share	shadow
133	22	begs get him	begs him
142	23	after curse add	she defiles every
144	1	duy	buy
150	12	faling	toiling